

Wild

AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE



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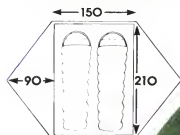
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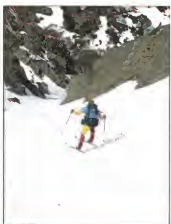
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AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

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WILD JULY/AUG/SEPT 1989 1

Dome On The Range

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The Development 'Game'

Something for everyone?

▲ EVERYONE IS PLAYING, OR NEARLY everyone, it seems, so it's timely to identify a number of sub-games, one or more of which is popular with a wide range of organizations and individuals. I've identified four main types of development of our natural resources, starting with the most direct and progressing to the more subtle.

The extraction industries. Mining, logging and alpine grazing are examples which spring readily to mind. Like tooth extraction, they tend to leave a gaping cavity which does little to enhance the appearance and is rarely satisfactorily filled. The product of a cargo-cult mentality (which has existed from earliest times) and, frequently, of old-fashioned greed, this particular sub-game considers the earth a natural store-house ripe for plundering, with scant regard for the consequences. The oldest form of development, until recently it was not considered necessary to try to justify extraction industries, so accepted had they been—we need food, clothing and shelter, don't we? Recent questioning by meddlesome 'greenies' and others has resulted in deeper thinking about possible answers. Their stance has raised issues such as the distinction between wants and needs, the avoidance of waste in production and consumption, the investigation of possibly less costly and less damaging alternatives and a greater consideration of the sharing of resources.

Tourism. A major 'growth industry', tourism is enjoying unprecedented boom times the world over as a consequence of significant increases in (Western) incomes and leisure time and, to some extent, education and urbanization. While tourist developments range from vast accommodation and recreation complexes insensitively placed in the middle of areas of great natural beauty to the simplest guided bush stroll, there is a tendency towards the large-scale and lavish. Ironically, whilst tourism, particularly adventure tourism, is frequently promoted as an opportunity to 'get away from it all', the reality is often a different story. Modern urban comforts and distractions are seen as essential components of resort developments. It is an unusual 'wilderness lodge' which does not offer accommodation with all mod cons, including tennis courts, swimming pools and saunas. Even at the simpler end of the scale, the environment has to be urbanized and sanitized, the experience degraded to cater for everyone, regardless of ability, fitness, commitment or inclination. Extravagantly graded and marked tracks intended for mass consumption are such an example.

Management. A form of tourism or, more precisely, 'government tourism', the management of National Parks and other public land is the 'quiet achiever' of the

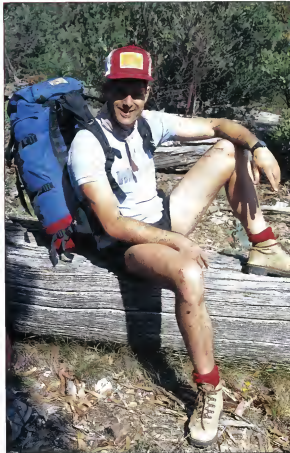
development game. If there was ever any question that land management authorities increasingly regard the public property under their control as being a resource to be 'developed', promoted and marketed, rather than simply administered in the public interest, the 'selling' of the recently established Grampians National Park by Victoria's Department of Conservation, Forests & Lands removes it. And, as with the Victorian Alps, this is the second time it has 'sold' the Grampians—the first, of course, was to the logging industry. A community-funded publicity machine including pamphlets, books, signs and opulent 'visitor centres' insists that the wonders of the Grampians are not to be missed. It's all part of another game—the power and numbers game.

Indirect development. In a sense, all who visit wild places are contributing to their 'development'—directly by their physical impact on the environment, and indirectly by increasing the knowledge and popularity of such places. This is even more applicable to those whose existence and/or employment is connected with wild places—including outdoor educators, clubs, equipment manufacturers and retailers, professional conservationists and publishers of wilderness literature, including *Wild*... a list involving many people. All these activities have their place but like many things, the way in which their participants behave, and even the extent of such activities, can significantly affect the nature and the scope of their influence. Conservation organizations have often decided that there is more hope for the future of our remaining wild places if limited numbers of people are introduced to them, taught to appreciate and encouraged to care for them. This also should be—and, fortunately, in many cases is—the aim of other responsible, thoughtful and caring bodies whose existence depends on wilderness. This is not always the case, however, and there are, sadly, examples of organizations 'biting the hand that feeds them' with avarice, power-hunger and short-sightedness instead holding sway.

It may be helpful to recognize the development game and its various sub-games for what they are. This is not always easy, however, as their real nature is frequently disguised behind a smoke-screen of euphemism, lofty ideals, justification, rationalization and obscuration. In fact, this defensive activity is a game in itself, but that is another story...

Rock 'n' Indexing

▲ AS WAS FORESHADOWED IN THE EDITORIAL of *Wild* no 31, *Rock* is now published twice a year. The first issue of the new-look *Rock*,



Above, Chris on Mt Skene, Victorian Alps.

Australia's climbing magazine, went on sale in May; the next will be available in November. Contributions for that issue, including news items and descriptions of new climbs, are welcome and should be submitted as soon as possible. Now in its tenth year of publication, past issues of *Rock* have become collectors' items, and most have sold out. To help look after your set, we have produced special *Rock* binders. Made to the same standard as the popular *Wild* binders, each has a capacity to hold ten issues and is deep blue with pink writing—\$14.95 each.

Readers will be interested to learn that work on the next *Wild* index, for issues 19–26, is well advanced. Watch out for further information. ▲

Chris Baxter
Managing Editor

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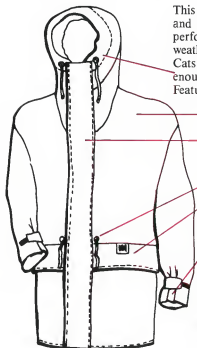
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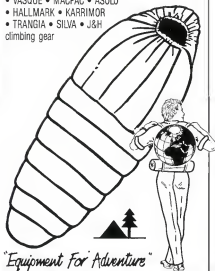
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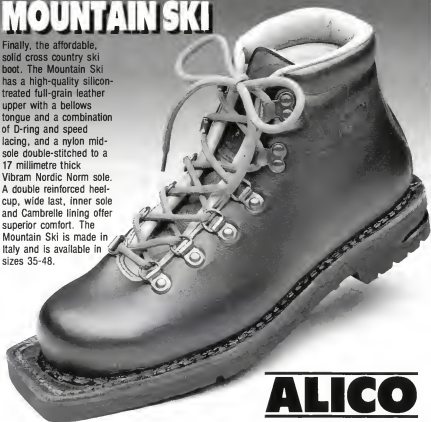
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Woodchip Wars

Battles on several fronts

Wild Information

Forests Face the Chop. Backlash from trade unionists and loggers followed the scrapping of the \$1 billion pulp mill planned for Wesley Vale, Tasmania, and reported in *Wild* no 32. The companies concerned announced their decision to abandon the project after the Federal Government set tough new environmental conditions for it in March. The Australian Council of Trade Unions was particularly scathing in its attacks on the (Labor) government after the decision. The Wilderness Society is quoted in the Press as saying that the strict environmental controls that led to the abandonment of the proposal were proof that the Federal Government had recognized a new environmental concern among Australians.

Unionists claimed that the Wesley Vale decision had cast doubt over a proposal for a similar mill in East Gippsland, Victoria, a contention quickly denied by Victorian Premier, John Cain. The previous month, major reports in the Press told how conservationists had accused Mr Cain of hiding plans to set up a \$1 billion pulp mill in the environmentally sensitive area. The East Gippsland Coalition claims that the government is trying to disguise the move by hiding it behind a three-year Value-Adding Utilization System (VAUS), which would introduce woodchipping to East Gippsland, initially utilizing timber left on the forest floor during logging because of its unsuitability for that purpose.

A report in the Press at the same time indicated that only 70% of Australia's paper requirements are met by the eleven pulp manufacturing mills and seven pulp processing mills operating in Australia to produce 2.5 million tonnes of paper a year, a deficit seen as having serious balance of payments ramifications. This is reportedly a situation which the Forestry and Forest Products Industry Council intends to rectify through a \$11.34 billion investment programme over the next 40 years. The proposal includes the establishment of three new hardwood pulp mills and seven new softwood pulp and paper mills. To supply sufficient wood for these mills, the council estimated that a softwood and hardwood plantation programme covering 600,000 hectares and costing \$2 billion would be required. At present, more than two-thirds of Australian forests and plantations are State-owned. The forestry and forest products industry is our second-largest (after food production), with a yearly turnover of \$7.7 billion and the provision of more than 100,000 jobs.

Recently, attention has shifted to the forests of south-eastern New South Wales following the Federal Government's announcement in December that it would extend, by another 15 years, the licence of woodchipping company Harris-Daishowa. Conservationists have



Above: stream-bed logging, Wonnangatta-Moroka National Park, Victoria. Jamie Pittock

spoken with one voice in denouncing the move as cause for serious concern about the future of National Estate forests in the area. They consider that the decision opens the way for the destruction of the remaining forests of the region, forests containing sections of high conservation value and rare flora and fauna, such as powerful owls and sooty owls, which the World Wildlife Fund Australia says could be threatened by an increase in woodchipping around Eden. According to both the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Australian Heritage Commission, existing parks in south-east NSW are inadequate for the protection of the region's plant and animal life.

In subsequent negotiations between the two governments involved in deciding the terms of the Harris-Daishowa woodchip export licence, the NSW Government has announced that it intends to defy the Federal Government and allow logging in National Estate forests, even if the Federal Government prevents woodchipping. This announcement came just days before a decision by the Australian Heritage

Commission, in mid-April, to include two forests in the region on its permanent register, a decision hailed by conservationists as a significant victory. The two areas, the Coolangubra and the Tantawangalo Creek catchment, have been at the centre of recent anti-logging protests. (In mid-April, 43 bushwalkers were arrested for entering a prohibited forestry area in this region.) It was also reported in the Press in April that the South East Forest Alliance, a group of conservationists fighting to save the region, has threatened to institute criminal proceedings against Harris-Daishowa for alleged breaches of its 1989 export licence.

NSW conservationists are also fighting on another front in their attempts to have 3,000 hectares of forest saved from plans for imminent logging, by pressing the NSW Government to have the area declared a Nature Reserve. The Tamworth Branch of the National Parks Association of NSW is calling for the establishment of the Ben Halls Gap Nature Reserve at the junction of the Great Dividing Range, Liverpool Range and Mt Royal Range. Readers are urged to write, supporting the proposal, to the Minister for the Environment, Tim Moore, Parliament House, Sydney, NSW 2000.



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Blue Mountains Rockclimbing and Canyoning

Wild Information

Important seminar indicates possible future management trends

Management Talk. On 16 April, the Blue Mountains district of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of New South Wales held a seminar on the management of rockclimbing and canyoning in the National Parks of the Blue Mountains. The seminar attracted wide interest and over 80 participants. They included rockclimbers and canyoners (both individuals and representatives from clubs), conservation bodies, police search and rescue squad members, ambulance officers, bushwalking search and rescue group members, commercial operators and NPWS personnel. The seminar was organized by NPWS Ranger, Ian Brown, a well-known bushwalker, climber and photographer (see review in *Wild* no 32 of *Poetry of the Mountains*).

Brown introduced the seminar by stating that although climbing and canyoning are generally welcome in National Parks, the NPWS has to consider safety and conservation issues. He said that most popular Blue Mountains canyons are in National Parks, but not all popular rockclimbing areas. Matters of particular concern to the NPWS include climbing on the Three Sisters, crowding in Claustral Canyon, and safety problems in the Grand Canyon and Glenbrook Gorge caused by falling rocks. Brown also commented on the use of bolts on climbs and marking of starts of climbs. Issues that affected other parks were mentioned and included the introduction of a permit system for climbers in the Warrumbungles. Although this was seen to impinge on climbers' freedom, he claimed it had generally been accepted. Brown voiced concern that the breeding of peregrine falcons might be disturbed by climbers. The close proximity of look-outs to climbers at North Head worries the NPWS. Brown said, as does the large number of lichens being wire-brushed at Evans Crown, an area which also has Aboriginal significance. Finally, Brown referred to the curtailing of climbing at Balls Pyramid due to the large number of nesting sea-birds.

Representatives from some of the groups in attendance outlined their own particular concerns. David Noble spoke about canyoning, saying that levels of usage had increased over recent years and this had led to safety problems rather than conservation problems. As canyons are being regularly 'flushed out' by flash floods, most damage to the parks from canyoning has occurred on tracks to and from the most popular areas, Noble claimed. He added, however, that a continuing concern is the placement of unnecessary bolts and illegal exit signs in canyons. He said that it is desirable that groups visiting canyons be able to effect a self-rescue in the event of getting into unexpected difficulties. People in each party



Right. traffic jam, Wollangambe Canyon. David Noble

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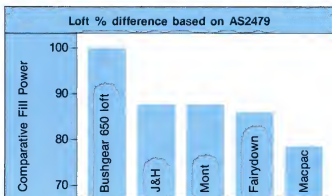
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should be able to navigate and rockclimb. The danger of flash floods is present in even the easiest canyons, such as Wollangambe Canyon. Noble considers that most canyons would not favour a permit system and although commercial parties are acceptable in some canyons they should avoid those, such as Dumbano Canyon, which are flanked by delicate rock formations. He concluded that education is the best way to avoid problems in canyons.

A representative of the Blue Mountains Environment Council said that the conservation movement generally favoured climbing and canyoning, but that climbing should be prevented in places such as on the Three Sisters, where there is a danger of rocks falling on people walking on nearby tracks.

Russell Taylor, representing the Sydney Rockclimbing Club, spoke of the motivation of climbers and how regulations impinge on their liberty. If climbing was restricted, climbers would have to re-assess their views on extensions to parks. Generally, climbers are opposed to permit systems, Taylor claimed. He pointed out that while there had not been many problems regarding permits in the Warrumbungles, a permit system would be difficult to apply in the Blue Mountains, with their many possible access points to cliffs and the large number of interstate and overseas climbers visiting the area. Taylor said that safety should be a personal responsibility, and that while some bolts are needed, most climbers object to over-bolting and the chipping of holds. He agreed that the 'gardening' of climbs may need to be re-assessed. Taylor said that the Three Sisters have important historic climbs and climbers would not favour a total ban. He also said that a shortage of camping areas is seen as a problem by climbers. Taylor concluded by saying that the cost of climbing rescues is not a large part of the total rescue bill and climbers would not favour a rescue levy without some input as to how rescues are conducted.

A representative from a commercial operator, Gail Baker, pointed out that commercial trips need to be financially viable and provide a high standard of safety. She suggested that unsafe operators might be denied access to some areas.

Gary Thorton of the Katoomba Police Rescue Squad outlined the statutory role of police in searches and rescues. In 1988, they attended 56 incidents in the bush and 39 on cliffs, many of which involved people with medical conditions, the inexperienced and the poorly equipped. One alarming incident concerned bolts on Mt Banks that were so poorly placed they could be removed by hand. Thorton said that commercial operators generally have an excellent safety record, although some groups are poorly led.

Terry McDermott, representing a special ambulance team, spoke of a group of 32 children and one (ir)responsible adult he came across in Wollangambe Canyon. The group was poorly equipped and had failed to realize the risks involved.

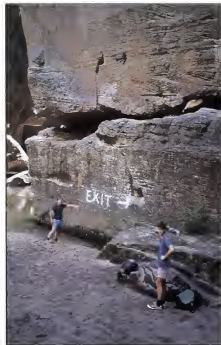
Keith Maxwell, of the Federation of Bushwalking Clubs' search and rescue section, pointed out that a party requires suitable fitness, experience, leadership and equipment. In canyons, he said, big parties

should be prohibited, every person should have personal abseiling gear, and a new sling should be used for each belay. Maxwell said that people should not need to be 'mothered' to canyons on marked routes.

After Maxwell spoke, participants broke in to workshops which recommended that:

Canyoning

- Bolt use be minimized, and avoided in wilderness areas. Natural anchors be encouraged where possible.
- No exit signs be placed in canyons.

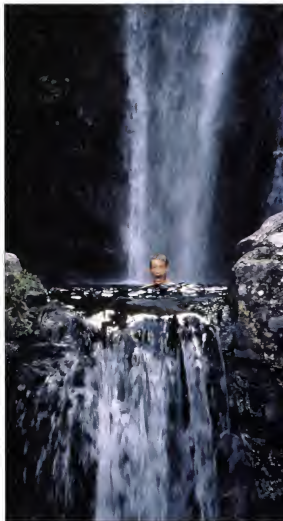


Above, exit sign (since removed), Wollangambe Canyon. David Noble. Right, coming up for air, Kalang Falls. Ricardo Thompson

- Camping in canyons be discouraged because of the danger of flash floods.
- Minimum impact canyoning be encouraged.
- Standards be set for the leaders of commercial groups and groups such as school and Scout parties. No training in abseiling take place in a canyon.
- A log-book be kept at Claustrol Canyon in an effort to self-regulate crowding.
- Each individual in a party have their own abseiling and prusiking equipment and know how to use it.
- The use of helmets be encouraged where there is a danger of falling objects (such as in the Grand Canyon).
- Leaflets on safety and equipment be distributed through specialist shops and NPWS offices.
- Permits not be adopted due to administrative and policing problems.
- Track notes may need to be restricted to prevent crowding.
- Small groups be encouraged.
- Intentions always be left with a responsible person.
- Canyoners be encouraged to let other groups know they are doing something wrong.
- No tracks be constructed to low-use canyons.

Rockclimbing

- Campsites be provided in certain areas.
- Site-specific management be adopted.
- Climbers be made aware of environmental matters.
- Bolts are necessary for some climbs, but the NPWS to set guidelines on their use.



- Fixed abseil-points be regarded as having a possible positive environmental impact—they prevent damage to trees.
- Commercial operators, but not other climbers, be accredited.
- A task force be set up to consider management of climbing (and canyoning). The NPWS appoint a rockclimbing liaison officer whom climbers could contact.
- A safety and opportunity pamphlet be prepared for distribution.
- A data base of climbing numbers and accidents be kept.
- Climbers be encouraged to develop a code of ethics.

Whilst only a 'dialogue session', and only applicable to rockclimbing and canyoning in the National Parks of the Blue Mountains, the seminar was important in indicating possible future 'management' trends affecting all rucksack sports on public land anywhere in Australia.

David Noble

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National Parks

Poll shows Australians reject 'development'

State of the Nation. The Australian Conservation Foundation reports that, according to a recent national opinion poll, an overwhelming majority of Australians strongly oppose the commercial exploitation of National Parks. The greatest area of opposition is to mining and petroleum activity (opposed by 85%). Sheep and cattle grazing in National Parks was rejected by 75%, while 72% opposed timber production as inappropriate activity in National Parks.

The Federal Government recently announced steps aimed at addressing two major issues of concern to the environment: depletion of the ozone layer and soil degradation. The government has announced its support for an international environmental pact to guard against potentially dangerous shifts in the earth's climate and atmosphere. Such an agreement is likely to have significant repercussions for Australian trade and the development of our resources, as participating countries could be expected to reduce production of fossil fuels.

At the same time, the ACF has announced the launch of its Greenhouse Campaign 1989 to combat what it describes as 'the decade's great challenge'. The ACF has announced that it will lobby for government action on the greenhouse effect, demanding a national strategy to address the issue. It is calling for donations to assist in this work: ACF, 8 Gipps Street, Collingwood, Vic 3066.

On another environmental front, the Federal Government announced a 'decade of soil conservation', beginning in 1991. The government is to commence a campaign to educate the public as to the need for action on soil erosion, acidity and salinity. The government programme will involve the adoption of parts of a joint submission from unlikely bedfellows, the ACF and the National Farmers Federation.

A Job for Batman? The fight to save Queensland's famous Mt Etna caves and their ghost bat (see reports in *Wild* nos 28 and 29) has escalated with arrests and heavy fining of conservationists, public meetings with the cement company concerned, blockades, lobbying of shareholders of the company, and blasting and cementing-over of Speaking Tube Cave by the company. Conservationists consider that their sole remaining avenue to prevent destruction of the caves is an appeal to the Full Bench of the Supreme Court, likely, they claim, to cost \$20,000. Send donations to: Mt Etna Committee, PO Box 538, Rockhampton, Qld 4700.

Rockin' Their Socks Off. *Wild's* sister-publication, *Rock*, Australia's climbing magazine, was selected for high commendation from over 1,500 entries at the 1989 National Print Awards for the printing quality of the 1988 issue. To mark ten years of publication *Rock*, formerly an annual, is now published twice a year. The January-June 1989 issue went on sale in May; the July-December issue goes on sale in November.

NSW Park News. In late January it was announced that the NSW Government had purchased a 30,000 hectare property, which will almost double the size of the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park, near Armidale. The following month, the Minister for the Environment, Tim Moore, tabled in parliament over 80,000 hectares of additions to NSW parks, including the 70,000 hectare Nombinnie Nature Reserve. In April, Mr Moore announced the addition of 200 hectares of rain forest, 'containing some of the world's rarest trees' and almost the entire known population of the red-fruited ebony, to the Limpinwood Nature Reserve near Murwillumbah. These additions follow the transfer of Lord Howe Island to the National Parks system.

At the end of February, the government announced 'a major programme of bushfire fuel reduction for sections of Blue Mountains National Park adjoining the Blue Mountains villages'. It also announced a similar programme for sections of Wollemi National Park and Kanangra-Boyd National Park.

In Kosciusko National Park, 260 hectares were burnt in March at Findlays Ridge, east of Khancoban.

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service has announced the development of a 'Volunteers in Parks' programme for Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. Volunteers are to take part in a pilot programme to provide educational activities for park visitors.

Kimberley Action. One of the successes of the Wilderness Society in NSW has been the spawning of special-interest groups that lobby for the conservation of important wilderness areas. One such group is the Friends of the Kimberley. The Kimberley is undoubtedly one of Australia's premier wilderness areas and deserves National Park status. The Friends of the Kimberley have built a wide body of experience brought back after a series of long walks in the region and have presented excellent slide shows of the area. This group is planning stalls, slide shows, letter-writing events and public meetings. They are also happy to give advice to people contemplating visiting and bushwalking in the Kimberleys. They meet at 7 pm at the Wilderness Society, first floor, 53 Liverpool Street, Sydney on the first and third Thursday of every month.

DN

Blubber. The NSW Government has announced amendments to the National Parks and Wildlife Act providing for heavy fines and/or jail sentences for people convicted of interfering with whales, particularly those in shallow water.

Greenline. The Wilderness Society has commenced a 24-hour Greenline recorded telephone information service in Sydney, giving details of 'the latest wilderness news, events and activities'—(02) 552 0947. The society's Sydney shop has moved to 92 Liverpool Street, and a new shop has been opened at 25 Bronte Road, Bondi Junction, NSW 2022.

Wild Information

Social Climbers. In an attempt to raise \$200,000 for the National Heart Foundation, a group of climbers of this name plans to establish a world record, recognized by the *Guinness Book of Records*, for the highest



Above. Social Climbers, including Wild Contributing Editor for mountaineering, Tim Macarthy-Shape (right), enjoying a necessarily light lunch over Sydney. Jonathan Chester

black-tie luncheon party on earth. Huascarán (6,890 metres), in the Peruvian Andes, the second-highest mountain in the world outside the Himalayas, is to be the location.

As a precursor to the event, which will hopefully include three women, the Social Climbers staged 'a necessarily light lunch' suspended 80 metres over the sea at Sydney's North Head in March.

Rescues. With a long period of wet weather in NSW early in the year (the Sydney area experienced at least 17 wet week-ends in a row), it is not surprising that there have been many searches and rescues. One group became lost a short distance down the Grose River from Blue Gum Forest. They wrote 'help' in the sand, then waited several days to be rescued. They would have got out earlier had they been able to interpret their map, realize where they were and walk the short distance out to the tracks that lead to Laura or Blackheath.

There were two major rescues from yet another wet Easter. A group of members of the Catholic Bushwalking Club was ascending the steep Catt Head in the Blue Breaks area. One member pulled a bit of the pass down on himself, sustaining a broken hand and

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Victorian Alps

Bogong draft management plan released



Above: Peter Treseder during his extraordinary Macleay River marathon, New South Wales. Treseder collection

concussion. Although other party members went for help quickly, due to the remote location the injured walker was rescued 36 hours later, by helicopter. The lesson to be learned from an accident such as this is that with the ground sodden by continual rain, even large boulders can loosen and be a danger to walkers on steep terrain.

The second Easter rescue concerned a group of young people from Canberra walking in the Budawang Ranges. With flooded creeks and one member suffering from a sprained ankle, they sensibly waited in a dry cave for the weather to improve. Unfortunately, it only worsened and they became overdue. The weather ruled out the use of helicopters but they were soon located in Pigeon House Gorge by a search party from the Sutherland Bushwalking Club.

DN

A Wild Barbecue. A small group of university lecturers and members of Sydney University Bushwalkers decided that the bottom of Claustal Canyon is a good place to hold a summer barbie. During peak 'canyon season' they set up their equipment at the Claustal-Raynon junction and enjoyed several dozen 'snags' washed down by ale and wine. Some of the hordes of canyoners visiting Claustal complained that after picking up the wafting smell of the cooking sausages, they were not offered any.

DN

That Man Again. In February, tiger walker, Peter Treseder ran from Armidale, NSW, by way of Gara Gorge and Macleay River to the junction of Georges Creek and the Macleay—114 kilometres in 13 hours 55 minutes. He next paddled a kayak down the Macleay to the Pacific Highway at Kempsey—150 kilometres

in 16 hours 50 minutes (the first continuous descent of the whole river). Treseder then completed this extraordinary continuous effort by pedalling a bicycle to the eastern extremity of the breakwater where the Macleay enters the sea at South-west Rocks—45 kilometres in 1 hour 10 minutes.

Not content with that rather anaemic 32-hour non-stop effort, the following month Treseder was at it again. This time he completed the first run of the 140 kilometre Bicentennial Katoomba-Mittagong Track in 14 hours 4 minutes.

Feathers Fly. The Victorian and NSW Governments are under increasing pressure to outlaw annual duck-shooting 'bloodfests' following findings, after this year's 'season', that quantities of lead could have polluted Victoria's wetlands. It has been estimated, for example, that on opening day of the 1987 season, alone, they were contaminated with 86.4 tonnes of lead. It has also been revealed that many birds subsequently die from lead poisoning by swallowing pellets—one dead swan was found by government officers to have over 200 pellets in its gizzard. Opponents also point to the number of birds of protected species shot—the Coalition Against Duck Shooting claims that over 5,000 have been retrieved in Victoria since 1981, a fraction of such birds shot. CADS also claims that up to 30% of native water-birds are wounded and crippled each season.

Alpine Woes. The plight of the Victorian Alps (see report in *Wild* no 32 and Doug Humann's article in this issue) continues to receive heavy media coverage. The proposed management plan for the Bogong section of Victorian Alps (due in February) was released in March by the Department of Conservation, Forests & Lands—see detailed review on page 75—and submissions officially closed in May. (Not the first time that a draft management plan of great

Wild Information

interest to *Wild* readers has been released by the department at such a time as to possibly preclude submissions after its conclusions have been reported in *Wild*.)

Following the report in *Wild* no 32 of plans to 'develop' Mt Stirling as a downhill ski resort, it has been reported in the Press that there are also plans to provide 3,000 new beds at Mt Buller.

There will be a realignment of the roads to Mt Hotham and Falls Creek to make way for more car-parking.

At Mt Hotham, there are plans to extend the ski runs to the area east of Swindlers Creek as well as Marys Slide and the Orchard. There will be several more ski lifts, and provision for up to 3,000 further beds.

Falls Creek will have new lifts, and the ski runs will extend to Mt McKay. There will be 4,000 new beds.

It is a matter of concern to conservationists that Victoria's ski resorts are administered by the Alpine Resorts Commission, which is not responsible to the government department concerned with conservation, even though it makes decisions which greatly affect the character of the Victorian Alps.

Brian Walters

Bull Dust. As a last-ditch effort to prevent the eviction of cattle from the Victorian Alps, in February, cattlemen organized a rally attended by 1,000 people at Watched Creek on the Bogong High Plains. Melbourne newspaper, the *Age*, wrote that 'The made-for-television protest by the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria on the Bogong High Plains was stage-managed as relentlessly as a scene from *The Man From Snowy River*'. The article went on to report how the 'slick production' was organized by Geoff Burrowes, a cattle farmer and producer of the *Snowy River* films. (For further information on the matter, see Doug Humann's article in this issue.)

A Plain in the Neck. Recent promotional material released by the company responsible for the development of Dinner Plain ('the only freehold ski village above the snow line in the Australian Alps') tells how current construction activity will take the 'village' to 140 buildings this winter, 'which is almost one-third of the way towards the eventual 2,000 bed capacity when the village is completed in 1995'.

A Monumental Achievement? Following the report in *Wild* no 31 (page 21) of the construction of an apparently unauthorized monument by members of a four-wheel-drive club in the Grant Historical Area, the Department of Conservation, Forests & Lands informs us that the memorial has now been removed.

Centre of the Universe? Victoria's Outdoor Recreation Centre is running a series of advanced first-aid courses for 'outdoor' people and has also recently produced a listing of outdoor recreational events. Phone (03) 457 5432.

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OUTDOOR SHOPS RUN BY OUTDOOR PEOPLE

Rock Jocks

Geoff Weigand in grading breakthrough

Wild Information

Cathedral Desecration. The Cathedral Range in Victoria's near north-east has long been a bushwalking and rockclimbing venue. The site of the first rockclimbing in Victoria, it is one of the most popular rockclimbing instruction areas in the State, and has what is probably the best bushwalk within day-trip distance of Melbourne. However, the famed tranquility of this beautiful area is threatened by the rezoning plan of a local shire to allow more than double the density of houses built on rural land adjoining the State Park. The shire has been attacked over the proposal by the National Trust and the Land Conservation Council. Planning experts see the issue as a test case for other State and National Park areas near Melbourne.

Safety in Numbers? Still reeling from the effects of publicity surrounding the financial woes of the Victorian Economic Development Corporation, the economically beleaguered Victorian Government had to endure the effects of the breaking, in March, of a scandal involving the Victorian division of the National Safety Council and the sudden disappearance of its Executive Director, John Friedrich. Millions of dollars, including many borrowed from Victoria's State Bank, appear to be missing. The division has ceased operation, causing concern in some quarters that the safety functions it performed, including bush rescue, may not have been left adequately covered.

The Gary Higgins

Grabbing the Grampians. Following our report on a massive development planned for Halls Gap, the *Wimmera Mail-Times* has reported that an application has been made for a planning permit for another, \$25 million, resort development, this time in the Wartook area of the Grampians below the Asses Ears and the Mt Difficult Range. The proposal includes two hotels with a total of 170 rooms and suites, at least 60 condominiums and apartments, a conference centre, a 'country club', shops and 'accommodation for executive staff'. A spokesman for Arapiles Shire Council, which is considering the application, was quoted as saying that 'If this project goes ahead, it will be an interstate and international tourist attraction of the highest standard and will boost employment prospects in the district'.

A recent Press story on mineral sands exploration in western Victoria close to the Grampians and Mt Arapiles (see page 21 of *Wild* no 31) suggests that costs of the proposed development could now almost double to \$300 million. It has been estimated that the mining company concerned may earn \$100 million a year from the project before tax. The item indicated that the scheme might have a 50-year life. Preliminary work on the deposit began in 1988, but mining is not expected to begin until 1993.

Black Elephant? Late in March, the Melbourne *Sun* newspaper reported that the Victorian Minister for Tourism, Steve Crabb,

proposed to rename prominent features of the Grampians with traditional Aboriginal names. Halls Gap business people and locals angrily revolted against the proposal, branding it as a political point-scoring exercise for Aborigines. Crabb also suggested that the famed Elephants Hide should be renamed because 'there has never been an elephant in the area'.

If the proposal is successful, the Grampians would become known as 'Gurliward', Halls Gap as Budja Budja and many other landmarks, such as the Asses Ears and Hollow Mountain, would be given similar treatment, resulting in possible confusion and thousands of dollars being spent on updating maps and tourist brochures.

GH

Beating Around the Brush. The Wilderness Society has expressed concern over legal, and illegal, cutting of broom bush from public land in the Big Desert and Sunset Country of the Victorian Mallee region for suburban fencing, an activity banned on public land in nearby South Australia. A report in the March issue of *Victorian Wilderness News* says that 'Over the past ten years the track network created by cutters has seriously reduced wilderness quality...The "industry"...(also) spreads weeds and threatens endemic Mallee fauna that prefers old stands of broom bush. The Mallee fowl, in particular, may be threatened'.



Above: Geoff Weigand on White Wedding (grade 32/33), Smith Rock, Oregon, USA—the first ascent of an American grade 5.14 by an Australian, Stephen Hamilton. **Right:** Weigand on the first ascent of You're Terminated (31), Mt Arapiles, Victoria, Mike Myers

Rockclimbing News. Expatriate Australian climber currently living in the USA, Geoff Weigand (see photo on page 21 of *Wild* no 30), made some significant ascents during a visit to Australia last summer, highlights of which were second ascents in fast times of Lats in

the Belfry (grade 31, downgraded to 30 by Weigand) at Mt Arapiles (see photo on page 21 of *Wild* no 29) and Serpentine (31) at nearby Mt Staplyton (see cover of *Rock* 1988), and the first ascent of You're Terminated (31) near Lats in the Belfry. This activity was



significant enough, but on his return to the USA, Weigand led White Wedding (5.14, 32/3) at Smith Rock, Oregon, after ten days of intense effort. One of only three 5.14s in the USA, this was the first ascent of a climb of that grade by an Australian, and a significant breakthrough for Australian climbing, indicating that Weigand, 24, is now breathing down the necks of the world's top rockclimbers. Full information and a profile of Weigand appear in the January-June 1989 issue of *Rock*.

Not to be written off, Malcolm Matheson responded with the first ascent of his desperately strenuous Contra Arms Pump (30), and Swiss climber, Martin Scheel, put up Milupa (30/31) and the awesomely steep David Or-Tiger (31/32), all at Mt Staplyton.

An increasingly popular activity with climbers overseas, the mixing of climbing with descent by *parapente*, a type of parachute used from cliffs and mountain-tops, has come to Australia. Martin Scheel was first to take to the air at Mt Arapiles (with a *parapente*, that is!) and now local climbers have followed, launching themselves with alacrity from the dizzy heights of the crags.

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Above: Karen Allchin telemarking in Polarplus Jacket IA on Mt Bogong.
Vic. Photo: Glenn Tempest/Open Spaces Right: Michael Hampton
wearing Tornado IA at Blue Lake, NSW. Photo: Glenn Tempest/Open
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Wild Information



Above: Swiss climber, Martin Scheel, making a slower-than-usual descent from Mt Arapiles, Victoria. Mike Myers

The latest Australian to climb Mt Everest, Jon Muir (see his article in *Wild* no 31) has had to put off a planned visit to Mt McKinley's Cassin Ridge, Alaska, following a fall from a tree in his back garden which left him with a broken ankle. Shortly before this, he'd established, mainly with Geoff Little, some 50 new climbs at nearby Mt Arapiles.

A climbing competition was held on a man-made wall in Wollongong on 23 April. Winner of the senior section was local climber Ant Prehn (see Folio in *Wild* no 32).

Tasmanian Tourism. Year-round helicopter scenic flights are now available at Cradle Mountain.

Following evidence that river-bank erosion is worse than previously believed, cruises on the Gordon River face restrictions.

A development, estimated to cost \$50-\$150 million over the next five years, is planned for Port Arthur. To be built on a 168 hectare site at Safety Cove, the project is expected to include sporting facilities as well as extensive accommodation.

Breaking Their Hartz. The April issue of *Wilderness News* reports that the Tasmanian Forestry Commission has commenced construction on a road through the Southwest Conservation Area. The road heads south from the existing Farmhouse Creek Road (see photo on page 13 of *Wild* no 32), between the Picton River and Hartz Mountains National Park, towards the World Heritage Area, to the south. The road will sever the Hartz Mountains National Park from the World Heritage Area and is to facilitate logging in the area.

Precipitous Caving. Over the Christmas-New Year period, members of the Tasmanian Cavermeering Club, Southern Caving Society and Victorian Speleological Association joined forces for a mini-expedition to the western slopes of Precipitous Bluff, south-west Tasmania. While the main aims of the expedition were science and documentation, some important discoveries were made. The most significant was Persephone, a 60 metre surface shaft which

eventually joined in to Bauhaus, adding 800 metres of length to the system, making it 2.3 kilometres long, with a depth of 123 metres. Stefan Eberhard dived the sump in Dampier Cave, which proved to be 43 metres long, and then surveyed 300 metres of attractive stream passage known as Stygologia. The kilometre-long 'roof-sniff' in Quetalcoat Conduit was finally surveyed to its end in a rockfall, taking the total length of that cave to just over two kilometres. (To gain an idea of what this involved, see the cover of *Wild* no 8.) Other undescended surface shafts near Bauhaus beckon a return trip.

Stephen Buntun

Self-out. The ACF reports that, despite growing public opposition, the South Australian Government has decided to proceed with the \$50 million tourist resort in the Flinders Ranges reported in *Wild* no 32. Approval for the first stage of the project, which is proposed to be completed by 1991, was announced in January. The ACF asks readers to write to the Premier, John Bannon, Parliament House, North Terrace, Adelaide, SA 5000.

The Same Old Story. The April issue of *Wilderness News* reports that the remote and spectacular wilderness area, the Kimberleys, in north-western Western Australia, is under intense pressure from developers. At Walcott Inlet, there are plans for a tourist resort on a 150 hectare lease in the recently-announced National Park. Just to the north, at pristine Prince Regent River, the society claims the WA Department of Conservation plans to build extensive facilities for 'management' purposes. Readers are encouraged to write to the Environment Minister, Parliament House, Perth, WA 6000.

Antarctica. The frozen continent has been in the news for a number of reasons that concern environmentalists. In January, French scientists admitted that their continuing work to build an airport at Dumont d'Urville violated the Antarctic Treaty and would wipe out large breeding colonies. The nests of 3,300 adie penguins, 290 cape pigeons and 264 snow petrels were being destroyed, a report in the UK newspaper the *Guardian* stated.

A letter published in the *Australian Financial*

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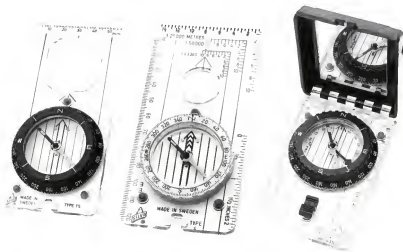
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Wild Information

Review in March suggests that Antarctica cannot support educational tourism as has recently been proposed. The writer cited the extensive damage that has already been done to wildlife by scientists visiting Antarctica, including the killing, by untethered dogs, of 100,000 penguins at the Argentine base of Esperanza.

In January and February, the Greenpeace vessel *Gondwana* disrupted the Japanese 'scientific' whaling programme in Antarctica by positioning itself tight on the stern of the Japanese factory ship, denying the whalers use of the slipway up which the slaughtered whales are drawn.

A 950,000 litre oil spill from the stricken Argentinian supply vessel, *Bahia Paraíso*, off Anvers Island, prompted the ACF to describe the incident as posing the risk of major ecological disaster.

Logging Axed. In January, the Thai Government banned all logging despite powerful opposition from vested interests in the logging industry. The government was assisted in its stand, however, by public outrage following the deaths of 350 people in flooding and mudslides in southern Thailand last November, which were blamed largely on illegal logging. At the end of the Second World War, forests covered some 70% of Thailand, but this figure has shrunk to 12-18%.

High Times. The 1988 International Gangotri Expedition comprised 17 climbers from four countries and was led by Hobart climbers, Jim Duff and Nic Deka. The primary objective of the expedition, the South Pillar of Shivering (6,543 metres), was not attained, but many climbers succeeded on the secondary objective, nearby Kedarnath Dome (6,850 metres).

Brigitte Muir reports that she has climbed Mt Kilimanjaro (5,895 metres) by the Western Breach with 'the compulsory Tanzanian guide following and asking, "May I push your bottom, Mama?"'

A Bitter Pill? A *Journal of Wilderness Medicine* is planned to commence publication in January 1990. Further information: Chapman and Hall Ltd, 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE, UK.

Shooting Stars. The fourth World Festival of Mountain Pictures is to be held in Antibes, France, on 6-10 December.

In the Bag. Colorado, USA, engineer, Igor Gamow, has invented a sleeping bag designed to save climbers from altitude sickness. The bag comes with a pump (combined weight is about five kilograms) which is used to raise the pressure inside the bag with an affected climber in it. The bag provides relief until the patient can be evacuated to lower altitude.

Corrections/Amplifications. The range of Bushgear Iceline sleeping bags advertised on page 60 of *Wild* no 32 is priced from \$149.

Readers' contributions to this department, including colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Send contributions to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Victoria 3181.

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'89 INTRODUCTIONS

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We are now introducing three mummy-shaped sleeping bags using quality Chinese grey goose down. The Kathmandu "Rumdoodle",

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Polarplus Jacket

Rumdoodle Sleeping Bag

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KATHMANDU

Tuning XCD Skis

Wild Ideas

Simple tips to make you turn better, from *Andrew Barnes*

▲ WHILST ALPINE SKIING BOOKS COMMONLY advise that skis must be tuned to provide best performance, cross country downhill (XCD) skiers have taken little notice. However, as more XCD skiers start to 'shred the rad', it's timely to point out that tuning skis is probably more important for free-heel skiers than for the alpine mob.

Why is this? XCD skiers using leather boots, pin bindings and often skinny, double-cambered, metal-edged skis can never turn as precisely as alpine skiers. As a result, it is easier to trip over sharp edges, slide off round edges and generally lose control when the going gets tough. And a bad fall in the back country may be more serious than one near a resort. The following is a simplified guide to making turns easier and more enjoyable, through basic tuning.

First, check whether your skis are base-high or edge-high. Run a *straight* edge (metal wax scrapers work well) along the ski. Always work tip to tail. Point the tip at a light source as you do it and sight along the bottom edge opposite the light. Light between the base and straight edge means an edge-high ski. Light between the metal ski edge and your sighting edge indicates a base-high ski. Bad skis can have sections of each.

Edge-high skis can be easily flat filed to a square edge that is flush with the base. Make sure you keep even pressure over both edges as you file. Base-high skis are probably best corrected at a specialist ski shop with a stone grinder. Shop around for the best price. Upon achieving a flat base make sure the edges are sharp by also flat-filing the outside edge. Eliminate burrs with fine-grade sandpaper or a burr-stick run square along the edge. A flat base means a stable ski that runs truly. It will also run faster and go edge to edge more easily as there are no bumps and dips to get in the way.

The next step is to bevel the edges. Almost all XCD skiers should bevel their skis. A true, 90° sharp edge requires precise control. Otherwise it leads to 'railing', catching edges and other nasty things. A rounded edge tends to be easy to turn on quality snow but is bad news on ice or crud. Most pin-skiers end up on rounded edges because they don't tune their skis. A bevelled edge makes turns easier to initiate. You will ski on sharp edges which you can 'set' on ice and slice through crud without the vagaries associated with round or square edges.

Take two wraps of electrical tape near the handle end of the file. (Use a medium-grained flat file; a proper ski file is good but expensive.) Place the middle of the tape on one edge and file the ski from tip to tail. This bevels the opposite edge. Don't over-bevel. We are trying to achieve a half- to a one-and-a-half-degree bevel, only on the edge of the ski.

Experiment at the tip of the ski. Do one or two passes then run your straight edge along the ski and see the result. Some people need to bevel the entire ski, others the tip and the



Above, let's hope he followed the author's advice! (Phil Coleman on Mueller's Peak, Snowy Mountains, New South Wales.) Andrew Barnes

tail, depending on skiing ability and how they like to turn. Sharp, bevelled edges are best dulled for the first ten centimetres from the tips, a good way to stop edges catching on ice and hard-packed snow. Use fine-grained sandpaper.

The most obvious, but often ignored, way to help you turn is to glider wax your skis. Glider waxing not only protects skis and makes them faster, it makes them easier to turn. Think in terms of 'releasing' the bases to initiate a new turn; glider wax means less friction and therefore easier 'release'. If your bases have a 'white' look, it's time to grit your teeth and do it. Buy an iron from an op shop. Melt glider wax on to the base of the ski, avoiding the grip section on 'automatics'. Keep the iron moving as you melt the wax in. If the wax is smoking, lower the iron temperature. Allow the ski to cool, then use a plastic scraper to scrape off as much wax as possible. That's all. It's the wax which has impregnated the base which is important. Leave the nitty-gritty glider-wax jobs to racers, perfectionists and gear freaks with time on their hands.

Looking for a graphic example of how tuning helps? Swap from a waxless skis to a waxing pair of the same model. The difference is astounding, as there is no grip section 'steering' the ski. Also, there is nothing to get in the way as you swap edges.

Two of the most popular skis on the market, the Karhu XCD Kinetic and Karhu Kodiak, are two of the worst in terms of factory finish. If you own either, run a flat edge along the bases. The metal edges will be square at the tip but develop a razor-edged lip opposite the grip section. The skis are made this way to raise the edge to the level of the positive kinetic pattern. Unfortunately, the lip causes the skis to rail, making them difficult to turn on ice or hard-pack. Flat-file the edges as much as possible—that is, until the kinetic base prevents going further. Then bevel, as described earlier.

You are sitting reading this. You feel lazy. It seems too technical. But then, you did bruise your hips on the ice last year and you swore you would learn to ski breakable crust. This will help. Go and do it, *now!* ▲

Andrew Barnes (see Contributors in Wild no 13) is a ski touring instructor and addict. When not on the snow he paddles white-water rivers.

Wild Ski Touring



BOGONG!

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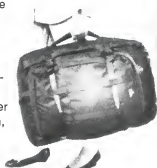
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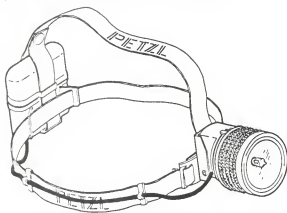
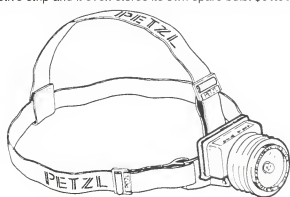
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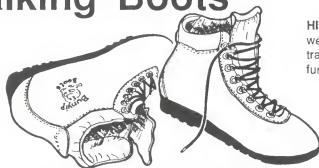


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DOWNWARD BOUND ON BOGONG

Sound advice for skiing Victoria's highest peak, from *Glenn Tempest*



▲ FOR MANY VICTORIAN, AND OTHER, cross country downhill skiers, Mt Bogong forms the focal point of their winter activities. It's here on Bogong that the snow is often deeper, the runs are always longer and, for those without a fear of gravity, the descents are sometimes steeper. With the longest surviving snow cover in the Victorian Alps, Bogong can guarantee excellent skiing right through until the end of October. Almost all keen gully-ski enthusiasts will make at least one annual pilgrimage to Victoria's 'mountain of mountains' through the winter or spring months.

Mt Bogong (1,986 metres) is Victoria's highest summit. The snow-covered crown on its steep western side is a familiar winter backdrop to the upper reaches of the Kiewa valley. Almost five kilometres of snaking summit ridge are joined by ten major spurs that descend in to the valleys like the spokes of a buckled bicycle wheel. It doesn't matter which spur you choose to climb, you're sure to lose at least a pint of sweat in the inevitable struggle to the top.

Because of Bogong's isolation and height, the weather is a very serious consideration for all skiers. Over the years at least five people have perished in blizzards on Bogong's often-icy slopes, and it's only been luck that has kept many others from meeting the same fate. Never underestimate the dangers of a Bogong snow storm—even exper-

enced Himalayan climbers have been unprepared for the ferocity of such a blizzard. There is little doubt, however, that Bogong's brooding malevolence is something of an attraction for its many dedicated devotees.

For the majority of the time, when the weather is favourable, Bogong's snow bowls and gullies can claim to be Victoria's finest ski runs, and rank as highly as anything in the Snowy Mountains of New South Wales. In fact, no single mountain in the Australian Alps can offer the same quality, quantity and unique variety of XCD runs as Mt Bogong.

For free-heel skiers, Cairn Gully provides what is perhaps the most famous of Mt Bogong's gully runs. This magnificent concave amphitheatre forms the major headwater source for Cairn Creek. In the winter and spring months, the snow lies deep and virtually unbroken across the whole bowl. It's possible to ski the easiest and longest run at an intermediate level all the way down to where the creek finally emerges. Skiing Cairn Gully on its western side directly from Mt Bogong's summit cairn is also one of the most tracked runs on the mountain. Watch out for the cornice though, particularly in mid-winter.

As the slopes are followed westwards (towards the Mount Beauty township), the general angle of the gullies increases. Here the runs are still long but



Left, Andrew Barnes leaping in to the fray in Tombstone Gully. Michael Hampton. Top, Michael Edmondson dropping in to the forest on the northern side of Bogong. Above, an alpine zephyr on Bogong. Glenn Tempest

the rocky terrain tends to add a new and much more serious feel to things. A scary drop off the sharp cornice at the top can prematurely age many would-be XCD skiers, while the piles of avalanche debris at the bottom are testimony to potential disaster. The gully along from Cairn Gully is a firm favourite and provides an exciting narrow-ski descent in to Cairn Creek. The first dozen or so turns are the steepest and require a bit of nerve to initiate.

The next bowl is the subsidiary run-off in to Cairn Gully and is often referred to as the Black Bowl, after the saddle of the

same name. Once again, the area mainly attracts advanced skiers. Possibly longer and sometimes steeper than Cairn Gully, these runs are occasionally broken by intermittent clifflines. Take careful note of the run that you intend to ski, because becoming airborne is a distinct possibility for the unwary. This particular bowl tends to ice up quickly and most skiers avoid it late in the day, especially on its western side.

From Black Saddle to Quartz Ridge there are literally a hundred and one possibilities for long, high quality ski descents. These runs are virtually untracked for most of the season due to their relative remoteness and the popularity of Cairn Gully. Many of the runs follow distinct steep gullies and wide ribs all the way down to the tree line. The snow can often get a bit crusty here, especially around the start of spring. Also, keep an eye out for any potential snow slides or small avalanches.

The snow slopes after Quartz Ridge and all the way round to the West Peak are known as the Western Runs. This is the most remote area on Mt Bogong and doesn't see as many skiers as the eastern side of the mountain. The Western Runs offer some of the steepest skiing on Bogong. The runs are rarely long, and varied gullies can be skied in a day without the trauma of tedious step-plugging epics associated with most other slopes on the mountain. Be careful in the gullies overlooking Mount Beauty. These narrow rock-walled descents weave about all over the place,

change their angle without notice and are often devoid of any suitable run-off at the bottom. One of the best runs here, and easily the most popular, is the main western gully off the West Peak. Straight as a die and quite steep, its classic status is assured amongst the few skiers in the know.

Between the West Peak and the Hooker Plateau is Stirling Gap. The large bowl that forms the upper Bogong Creek catchment is one of the very few sheltered locations on the mountain to pitch a tent. Later in the season the creek is also a good source of fresh water. The Stirling Bowl offers plenty of intermediate slopes upon which to carve Telemark turns. It's an area that tends to collect and hold the snow until late in the season. One of the more enjoyable ski runs follows the skyline ridge near the West Peak at the top of the Stirling Bowl, down in to Bogong Creek. Keep going all the way on the snow-covered creek bed 'until the bowl suddenly steepens and narrows. Stop here as the run ends in an abrupt vertical drop, forming the upper Bogong Creek falls. A spectacular scene to look at but not one in which to take an active part.

Bogong's north-western slopes continue all the way from the West Peak to the infamous Staircase Spur. This three kilometre stretch provides limited skiing potential for much of the season. Here the slopes are steep, and broken with a sizeable number of rocky steps over which to fall. Being exposed to constant sunshine doesn't help the snow cover either. Despite these drawbacks,



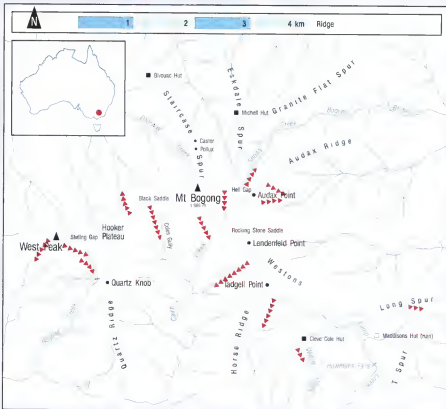
Above, Mt Bogong's West Peak, with its steep gully runs clearly visible. Tempest

there are some superb exceptions, especially after heavy midwinter snowfalls. Try the almost-hidden gully, above Black Saddle, that drops off the Hooker Plateau.

The famous Staircase Spur and its neighbouring ridge, Eskdale Spur, are the most popular ascent routes on Bogong. Both these long climbs are quite arduous, particularly during the height of winter when deep snow in the forest can make travelling far from easy. It was near the top of the Staircase Spur that three people died in a blizzard during August 1943. Ironically, they were only minutes from the now-destroyed Summit Hut. A memorial cairn marks the spot, and reminds others to take seriously the potential fury of Bogong's weather.

For many skiers who visit Mt Bogong,

Mt Bogong XCD Ski Runs





Cleve Cole Hut at Camp valley is the most popular destination. Situated three and a half kilometres south-east from the summit, at about 1,780 metres, Camp valley is another of the few sheltered locations on the mountain. The hut is also often reached by T Spur, which is approached from the Bogong High Plains down Duane Spur, crossing the Big River *en route*. This approach is a multi-day trip and is more popular with ski tourers than XCD skiers. The ridge between Camp valley and Audax Point tends to be a favourite of many skiers due to the proximity of the hut. The western side of the ridge offers advanced runs down interesting rock-walled gullies. These slopes are often icy in the early hours of the morning, but are in condition during the later part of the day when the sun has had time to soften them. Most skiers, however, are attracted to the other (eastern) side of

the ridge. Audax Point has some great, long, intermediate descents down open slopes. There are many possibilities beyond Rocking Stone Saddle, Lendenfeld Point and Tadgell Point. Here the snow slopes are far less committing and tend to soften up early in the day. Tadgell Point is very popular, especially when the weather excludes skiing further on towards the Bogong summit.

Mt Bogong isn't a novice's mountain and should be avoided by those who don't have enough skiing and snow-camping experience. People planning a winter ski trip should all carry an ice axe and at least a pair of instep crampons in case of nasty conditions. Even metal-edged skis are close to useless on hard ice. You'll be surprised at how easy it is to slide over the edge after falling off your skis. You'll be even more surprised when you crash in to the rocks and trees 300

metres below. Some XCD skiers use self-arrest grips to stop themselves in the case of a fall. It's not a bad idea and has already saved at least a couple of lives.

Mt Bogong at the height of winter is regarded with a healthy respect. Its massive bulk can certainly conjure brooding hostility when viewed from the Bogong High Plains, to the south.

Springtime, and Bogong's winter harshness begins to soften as the weather becomes milder and the snow begins to melt. This is often the most enjoyable time of the year to ski. The snow melts during the day and freezes at night, creating superb corn snow.

Funnily enough, it's about the same time as all the resorts are packing up and closing down. ▲

Glenn Tempest (see Contributors in Wild no 4) has been a Special Adviser to Wild since our second issue. A renowned raconteur, climber and mountain photographer, Glenn is an experienced and enthusiastic cross country skier.

BIG DAY ON BOGONG

A 'guided tour' of the best runs, with *Michael Hampton*



▲ IT IS EARLY SEPTEMBER. WINTER HAS been cold with good snowfalls. We climbed Staircase Spur during the night under a clear starry sky and made camp near Bivouac Hut. Now, the chilly moonlit night has given way to a fine, crisp dawn. We are 'up Bogong' with veteran gully-basher and guide, Uncle Bill. During one long day he will take us on a tour of Bogong. Travelling in a clockwise direction, we will ski the best runs. First south to Cleve Cole Hut and Long Spur, then to the West Peak. Five runs a day on Bogong is normal; today we may ski up to fifteen!

Leaving Bivouac Hut, we clear the tree line and commence the traverse past Castor and Pollux, climbing towards the Gadsden Memorial. Our eyes keep wandering to the slopes falling away to the Eskdale Spur. Here in the Mountain Creek bowl, the snow is softening nicely in the morning sun. Tempting, but no; it's not worth a quick run. Best continue to the top where the real action starts. 'Stop fidgeting or I'll put your blinkers on', Uncle Bill jokes.

From near the summit we ski down to Hell Gap. A quick drink, a handful of scroggin, camera out, snap snap. Where now?

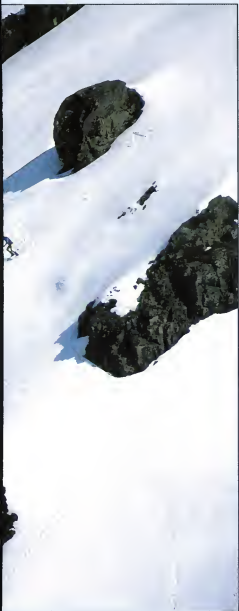
Cairn Gully, Bogong's 'Bourke Street', is still shaded and icy. Who wants to ski over old tracks and head-plant craters anyway? On the opposite side of the gap, east-facing Audesk Gully is pristine white under the bright morning sun. A few tentative turns to test the snow. Conditions are perfect, let's go!

How many turns before resting? Let's say a dozen. We have paused twice, maybe three times, but still the gully drops away. It narrows as we ski between rocky outcrops. Our thighs now burning, we grin and gasp, and finally halt way down under Granite Flat Spur. Phew, what a great run, and that was only the first. We smear on more sun cream then start the long walk out. Reaching the top, we cross Audax Ridge to stand above another long gully. This is 'proper' Audax Gully, with distinctive rock outcrops on the south-facing fall.

Suddenly 'Nipper', a keen young skier,

takes off down the shaded, icy slope. He does one, then two, flashy jump-Telemarks, then a caught ski edge sends him careering away in an uncontrolled high-speed slide. Shaking his head, Uncle Bill traverses the gully entrance into the sunlight. Prodding the snow with his pole, he finds two centimetres of softened crystals. Satisfied, he commences linking smooth, tight parallel turns, spraying the tangled wreckage of the young skier with snow as he passes. Recovering, Nipper struggles to his feet wondering what went wrong. Unfortunately, he doesn't realize that if he starts up the hill now, Uncle Bill will follow behind and use his steps. Off he goes anyway. Later, the older skier comforts the youngster, and tells him that avoiding accidents is important on Bogong, as help can be several hours (or even days) away.

Skiing south to Cleve Cole Hut we keep to the eastern side of the main ridge. Far off in the distance shines Mt Kosciusko, Jagungal and the other peaks of the Main Range. Below pass



Above, Mike Edmondson on a steep western run. **Right,** a chilling reminder—the Gadsden Memorial plaque, Staircase Spur. **Tempest.** Far right, 'Will the Editor's snow-plough turns suffice here, lads?'—ski tracks in Tombstone Gully. Hampton

hectares of snow-covered mountain-side broken only by two major spurs. This popular area is known as Westons. Other skiers are enjoying the sunny slopes. We pause to admire their serpentine tracks before continuing to the hut. Over a brew I peruse the hut log-book. As always, it is full of drivel, serious stuff and a few good laughs. My contribution is a drawing of some absent mates having extreme difficulty standing on their skis. Sniggering, I close the book, knowing they will be here the following week.

A surprise! During morning tea the weather has suddenly 'socked right in'. Visibility is down to twenty metres and already ten centimetres of fresh dry snow has fallen. Bogong sure is unpredictable. No point going back to the top. Mary, Nipper and Uncle Bill head out past Clochmerle Rose, the hut

dunny, to check out Wotan Gully. Jane and I ski down Camp Creek to the junction of T Spur and Long Spur. Even in a white-out it's fun gliding down the luge-like snowed-in creek bed, with occasional stacks in to unseen snow banks. Following the route of the Alpine Walking Track, we pass the Madison Hut ruins and enter the snow gums. We break out above a sheltered open bowl on Long Spur. Here the powder lies deep, sometimes blowing back over our waists as we carve swooping Telemark turns.

We meet the others back at the hut and during the ski to Haunted Gully exchange reports. If Uncle Bill's wild stories are correct, the snow in Wotan is piled so high it covers the trees. Haunted



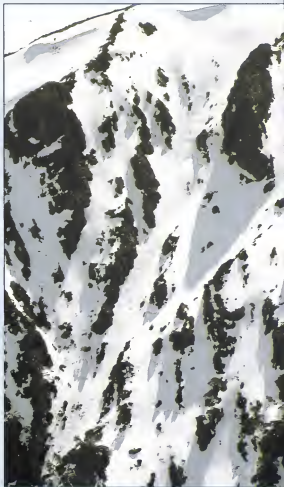
Gully, the first major drainage west of Camp Creek, offers more excellent powder skiing on moderate slopes through sheltered timber.

As we climb Horse Ridge towards the pole line, the wind drops. Just as suddenly, the sun breaks through the clouds. Gaining Lendenfeld Point we stop for lunch. A big lunch. Uncle Bill tells of a run which starts just over the crest to the south-east. 'Funelling between rocks, then opening out, you drop way down towards the tree line. Just when it seems over, a gap in the trees appears on the right. I would say it finishes about 200 metres below where we sit.' It is enough enticement for Nipper, Mary and Jane. A last mouthful of scroggin and off they go. We arrange to meet on the West Peak for afternoon tea. Uncle Bill and I are off to try something different. Skirting Cairn Gully, we ski southwards down its western lip. Nearing the ridge end, we ski to the edge and look down Tombstone Gully, one of the best chutes on Bogong.

On steep slopes getting started is always hard. We avoid the treacherous shady areas next to the rocks. A fall like Nipper's would be disastrous. Push off, short traverse, start the descent. Jump and turn, skis flashing across the fall line. Turn, turn...Feeling rhythm, thigh muscles straining, a few more turns, stop, rest. Shouting encouragement, whooping and laughing, experiencing a mixture of fear and joy. Sloughing snow slides before us, and cliffs loom on either side. There is only one way out—down.

It is hard to continue the descent. I slip,

but arrest my fall, mad at missing a few turns. Rhythm restores confidence. Alternately we continue, as the lower gully fans out and we are finally halted by Cairn Creek. I hope the others take a photo of our tracks. We climb out by Coles Gully. These slopes between Black Saddle and Quartz Ridge are another vast area rarely skied. On the undulating ground above we alternately skate and shuffle, doing effortless parallels on the gentle downhill sections. On the West Peak we look directly down

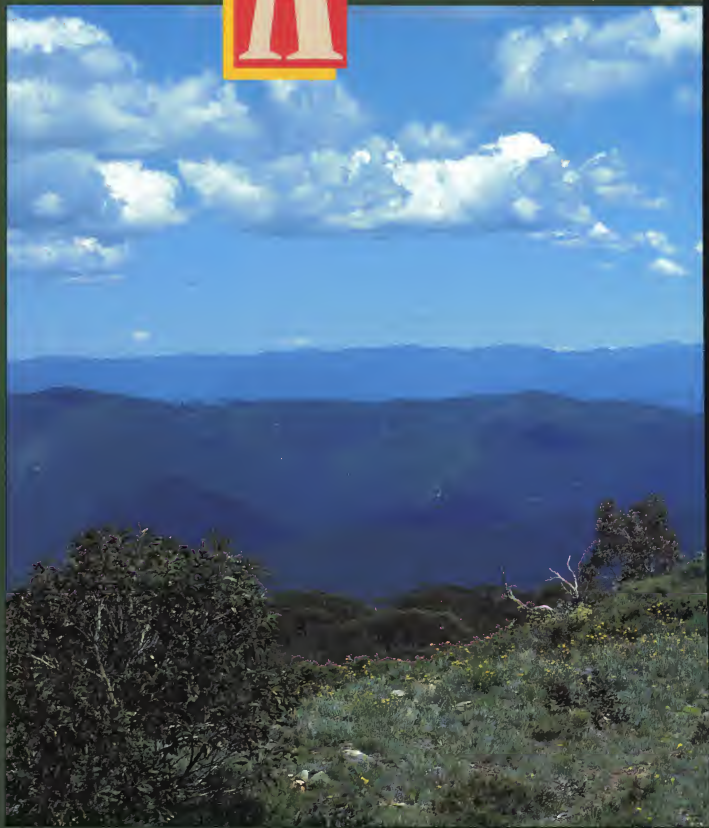


on the lush Kiewa valley, seemingly a stone's throw away. We ski a steep gully which drops towards Mount Beauty. There are many chutes and steepes between large rocky promontories. The rock adds to 'the feel' and the afternoon light is perfect for photos. One last easy run down to Bogong Creek then we begin the trip back.

Wearily, we plod towards the summit. Windburnt, sunburnt and bruised (especially Nipper), our clothes caked with sweat, we descend to Bivouac Hut as the sun sinks below the horizon. The last rays bathe Bogong in golden-pink light. Back at camp we enjoy the delicious feeling of tiredness and peace, not to mention dinner and a long swig of port. ▲

Michael Hampton (see Contributors in *Wild* no 17) lives in Melbourne and has pioneered many XCD runs in the Australian Alps and skied extensively overseas.

THE AUSTRAL



IAN ALPS



Wild Conservation

A Victorian perspective
on threats to our highest
places, by *Doug Humann*

▲ THE AUSTRALIAN ALPS CONTAIN THE most elevated land in Australia. Largely snow covered in winter, the alps extend some 400 kilometres from the mountains west of Canberra to the Baw Baw Plateau north-east of Melbourne. Known for the variety of scenery and the recreational pursuits they offer, the Australian Alps are equally famous for their natural heritage values.

Only at Mt Kosciuszko and in central Tasmania have glaciers played such a significant part in forming highland features. Here are Australia's highest plains and deepest valleys. The alpine flora is unique, derived as it is from Australia's journey north as the continents broke up. Alpine and sub-alpine ecosystems in Australia are virtually restricted to these areas and numerous species of plants and animals are found only here.

Nowhere else in the world can you discover such a variety of eucalypts. Stunted snow gums at the tree line and the tallest flowering plants in the world (the mountain ash) illustrate the capacity of these trees to adapt to the range of climatic conditions of the Australian Alps. In the Victorian Alps alone 34 species of mammals have been recorded (including the rare mountain pygmy possum), 183 species of birds, 17 amphibians (including Victoria's rarest, the spotted tree frog) and 13 native fish.

While significant areas of the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales have long had the protection of National Park status, the Victorian Alps contain a collection of unconnected National Parks which are not uniformly managed and are inadequate to protect vital natural assets. The accompanying map, showing proposed and existing National Parks, roughly defines the Victorian Alps.

The Proposed Victorian Alpine National Park

As promised during the 1988 State Election, the Victorian Government

Left, there are few vistas of the Victorian Alps in which the effects of logging are not visible: on the Blue Rag Range. Chris Baxter

reintroduced, in April 1989, legislation to create a Victorian Alpine National Park. This legislation, which arose out of recommendations by Victoria's independent Land Conservation Council (LCC) to governments of both major parties, was intended to pass through the Victorian Parliament by the end of May. In 1979, the LCC recommended six new conservation parks be established in the alps. Of these, only Cobberas-Tingaringy National Park was not fully proclaimed, but the Government finally did this in April 1989. In 1983, the LCC recommended some additional areas be added to form the Alpine National Park.

When the Alpine National Park in Victoria is secured there will be a continuous strip of reserved public land with National Park status along the Great Dividing Range from Namadgi in the ACT, through Mt Kosciuszko in NSW to within about 150 kilometres of Melbourne. In places the park will merely be a narrow spine (notably along the Barry Mountains). The Mt Buffalo and Baw Baw National Parks will remain isolated from the proposed Alpine National Park. But the Alpine Walking Track will mostly be within the chain of parks and the vision conceived over 50 years ago, when Myles Dunphy proposed a bi-State Snowy-Indi Primitive Area, will have become a reality.

Australian Alps World Heritage Nomination Proposal (WHNP)

In 1988 the entire Australian Alps, including all the parks mentioned above, were the subject of a WHNP, put forward by the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA). The basis for the nomination was the distinctive sclerophyll vegetation of the alps, a factor supported by numerous scientists and observers. The nomination satisfies all four World Heritage criteria which relate to it containing significant evolutionary and ongoing processes, 'superlative natural phenomena' and rare species. When a property is placed on the World Heritage list the national government is obliged to ensure it is properly protected and managed.

The Victorian Government has accepted this nomination and promised to support it. The NSW Government supports World Heritage listing for the areas in NSW and has also reacted favourably to the WHNP.

Pressures on the Australian Alps

While we await these developments to protect the alps, pressures exist which could compromise the integrity of the Alpine National Park and its natural heritage values. These pressures are strongest in Victoria. Forestry, mining, grazing, the operations of ski resorts and other recreational pursuits, as well as hydro-electric works, have all compromised the potential value of the proposed National Park and are likely to continue to do so in the future.



Above, logging in a stream reserve, upper Macalister River, Wonnangatta-Moroka National Park. Jamie Pittock. Right, the proof of the pudding...—grazed, left, and ungrazed land, Pretty Valley, Bogong High Plains. Far right, cattle damage in a creek near Johnstons Hut, Bogong High Plains. Henrik Wahren

In NSW the same pressures have existed but the outstanding natural values of the alps have been largely protected. This is instructive for Victorian authorities as they prepare to manage the Victorian Alps as a single National Park.

Ski resorts

Apart from the large flattened slopes left after logging, the ugliest impact in the alps is the environment of the ski resorts. Fortunately their distribution is restricted, but they remain visible for scores of kilometres around. With growth and profits in mind, development pressures on fragile alpine areas are enormous.

All Victoria's ski resorts which offer overnight accommodation, and the proposed development at Mt Stirling near Mt Buller, are excluded from the proposed Alpine National Park. This

ignores their natural heritage value and places them under the control of the development-oriented Alpine Resorts Commission rather than the Department of Conservation, Forests & Lands (CFL), which manages National Parks.

The natural unity of the alps is destroyed by these development enclaves and evidence in Victoria suggests environmental considerations may be secondary. Several examples illustrate why placing these areas under the control of CFL may be desirable.

Mt Stirling, near Mt Buller, is valued amongst other things for nature conservation, physical charm and relatively isolated cross country skiing. A high speed aerial gondola up the Delatite valley from car-parks lower down has recently been mooted here to service Mt Buller and Mt Stirling.

At Mt Hotham the resort area is surrounded by Bogong National Park, home to the mountain pygmy possum whose continued survival is threatened by development. A tunnel constructed under the main mountain road by CFL is

intended to help its breeding, but other interests could intrude. For example, in December 1988 heavy rains and the clearing of ski slopes above Swindlers Creek at Mt Hotham led to a series of massive landslides (see pages 16 and 17 in *Wild* no 32). A multi-million dollar

a number of disturbing occurrences. There were serious breaches of basic forest practice identified: abandoned fuel drums at landings where logs are loaded, logging of stream-side reserves and inadequate cross-draining of snag tracks. A disproportionate number of

delayed its full proclamation until April 1989. Only when a mining company withdrew its application for development leases over 6,000 hectares of the unproclaimed part of the park (which totals 38,000 hectares) did the government then proclaim the full park. The government's reluctance to proclaim all of this park had brought in to serious question its commitment to the Alpine National Park and World Heritage Nomination and its policy of no mining in parks.



'village' has been built at Dinner Plain on the edge of the park, just east of Mt Hotham. It received attention in the media recently. The capacity of its waste disposal system is in question and excess sewage has to be removed by tankers to prevent dams rupturing or overflowing. There would obviously be serious concerns if wastes were to enter mountain streams.

Meanwhile, within Kosciusko National Park the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) control the built environment of the ski resorts as well as the natural environment. All building leases and building and environmental standards are administered by NPWS. While there is obviously a significant impact on the landscape and there are many people to satisfy, a body which does hold environmental concerns to the fore has control.

Of course, all this may be purely academic. If we are suffering global warming, there may be insufficient snow or very short seasons well before the middle of the next century. What then will become of the ski resorts that presently blot the tops?

Forestry

In NSW there has been no logging within Kosciusko National Park, although logging did take place in lands that were subsequently added. In the ACT there is no native forest industry. Logging continues in Victorian National Parks and in areas which form part of the proposed Alpine National Park. Given that clear-felling occurs in these parts, total destruction of natural habitat, at least in the short term, is inevitable.

In a survey of logging sites which gained considerable media coverage in Victoria (April 1988), the VNPA revealed

breaches occurred in existing or proposed National Parks—notably in the alps, at Wonnangatta–Moroka National Park.

The continuation of forestry in the alps poses serious problems for the protection of natural heritage values. Roads encourage the spread of weeds and vermin and increase access into formerly pristine areas—like the upper Howqua and Jamieson Rivers and Errinundra. There is erosion and loss of water quality. There is also loss of aesthetic value, notably on the West Kiawa valley below Mt Feathertop. The boundaries of the proposed Alpine National Park, however, appear to have been drawn in such a way that the impact on forestry will be limited. In fact, 'once-only' logging is to be allowed within the park, and additional areas will be added to the park when logging is completed. The VNPA estimated in 1985 a loss of only 5% of total commercial timber reserves.

Mining

There is no commercial mining in NSW National Parks. In Victoria, the Australian Labor Party Government and the Liberal Party have both stated there should be no mining in National Parks. The environmental consequences of mining are obvious. In April, the Victorian Government introduced amendments to National Parks legislation to ban mining in National and State Parks and wilderness areas, although there are 25 existing titles to be honoured.

There have been problems with mining in part of the proposed Alpine National Park in Victoria, especially in the then unproclaimed section of Cobberas–Tingaringy. Although part of the park was proclaimed in 1979, mining exploration



The mining company concerned is currently seeking approval from the Victorian Government for a mining project near Benambra, just west of the Cobberas–Tingaringy National Park. This year the government was challenged over its approval of the use of a unique montane swamp to deposit hazardous mining wastes from the above project.

Grazing

Alpine grazing clearly demonstrates the contrasting approaches taken by authorities in NSW and Victoria and is the land use which has prompted the greatest controversy.

This has been most noticeable in Victoria. Here alpine grazing still continues, despite scientific evidence from NSW and Victoria which indicates conclusively that grazing by sheep and cattle is not compatible with nature conservation, especially in fragile alpine and sub-alpine environments. The proven advantage of its cessation is clearly illustrated by the summer wildflower display in Kosciusko National Park.

Cattle have grazed public land in the alps for over a century. Grazing was prohibited in Kosciusko National Park in

1969. Research had shown that after a century of grazing and burning in the alps, the original vegetation has been severely damaged and there has been accelerated erosion and run-off. In Victoria, burning and sheep grazing have been prohibited in the alps since 1955. Since 1958, Mt Feathertop, Mt Loch and Mt Hotham have been closed to cattle grazing. At the same time, the number of cattle, and their length of occupation of the high country, became controlled. Subsequently, other small parts of the high country have been freed from cattle grazing.

What is now at issue in Victoria is the removal of cattle, by May 1991, from another 4.5% of the area in the alps still

detail has concluded that grazing is good for the high country.

Nor it seems is there any truth in the claim that alpine grazing reduces blazing. A build-up of grass does not occur in the absence of grazing, as evidenced by experience in the Kosciusko region. Alpine snow grass is a small plant, not particularly flammable, which does not grow larger in the

alpine grazing, the VNPA has come to the following conclusions: that grazing leads to the deterioration of moss beds, to soil erosion, loss of plant species and diversity and changes in vegetation structure.

Even with the proclamation of an Alpine National Park in Victoria, grazing is to continue on significant portions of sensitive high country, within its



Above, the controversial Bluff Hut was a simple affair in a relatively undamaged environment in 1961. **Chris Baxter.** **Right,** now it has mysteriously grown and is surrounded by an ecological disaster area. **Far right,** the impact of horses near the hut. **Doug Humann**



suitable and available for grazing. These areas include parts of the Bogong High Plains (already National Park). The Bluff and Howitt Plains (part of the proposed Alpine National Park) are also included.

1991 marks the end of a ten-year phase-out period, during which time governments of both major parties have worked alongside graziers to provide alternative high-country grazing licences in less sensitive areas. Indeed, the graziers' one-year licence renewals might have been curtailed immediately. Thus considerable time has been given and no one is being suddenly evicted from the high country. Only eight licence holders are affected, all of whom run freehold properties in lowland areas surrounding the alps. The previous Liberal Government offered these phase-outs in 1980 and they date from that time.

Protagonists of grazing still point to the Mt Kosciusko area to demonstrate how the alpine environment degrades without domestic livestock. Furthermore, they claim that the alpine environment is not altered by grazing. Their arguments are fallacious and not supported by the evidence. No scientist who has studied alpine vegetation in

absence of grazing. There is also considerable evidence to suggest that cattle increase the number of shrubs by their constant trampling and grazing which prevents grass from growing on bare ground. This, in fact, encourages the growth of shrub species which are more highly flammable. Research by Dr Richard Williams of Monash University shows that whilst some palatable shrubs within open heath will increase in cover if cattle are removed, the number of species which behave in this way is small. Moreover, these species tend not to grow very tall and in the absence of grazing will eventually die out and be replaced by herbs and grasses.

Interestingly, evidence from NSW shows that of more than 40 fires in the Kosciusko region since 1985-6, one third were ignited outside the park. The bigger fires have been within the park, but that is where more difficult terrain is found.

Graziers often argue that at least some of the grazing damage is due to rabbits and native herbivores and not to cattle. In fact, neither rabbits nor native herbivores are particularly common above the tree line. Regarding the argument that weeds will build up without cattle, it should be noted that the activity of alpine grazing is one of the reasons for the presence of weeds in the first instance. Obviously, proper management mechanisms need to be in place to prevent the spread of weeds and vermin.

In a summary of over 30 years' scientific research on the effects of

boundaries, for an indefinite period. Graziers were offered seven-year leases when the Alpine National Park Bill was re-introduced.

Despite this, the graziers have mounted an emotive campaign. In an address to the Mountain District Cattlemen's Association in February 1989 an MDCA spokesman said: 'For too long, we have endured the lies dressed up as fact about cattle grazing damaging our beloved high country... We have watched while a small group of radicals and crazies...has grown even more arrogant and demanding. Parading lies disguised as scientific fact, they have created the illusion of a massive following and have enslaved governments of both political persuasions to their view. Theirs is the classic fascist tactic—the big lie technique. Theirs is the classic fascist goal—privilege for the few, exclusion for the majority'.

The argument is not with the graziers. It is with their cattle and it does rely on fact. A minority do have a privilege, and they are the 89 leaseholders (1987-8) in alpine areas and the cattle who graze on an area of unique natural heritage which should be protected for perpetuity, for all.

Wilderness areas are for those who want to walk, ski, climb or canoe. Roads and tracks are for those who want to drive or ride. Suitable areas for activities suited to a fragile alpine environment.

Recreation

One intention in creating an Alpine National Park is to encourage access. Kosciusko National Park has been so successful that over 3,000,000 visitors

pass through the gates each year, providing admission fees alone of over \$1 million dollars. In order not to compromise the integrity of the park, some activities should be restricted. Two such activities, other than alpine skiing, are four-wheel-driving and horse-riding.

In Kosciusko National Park there are over 1,300 kilometres of fire tracks and four-wheel-drive access roads. In Victoria there are estimated to be about 2,000 kilometres of four-wheel-drive tracks within the proposed park and over 4,000 immediately outside. This appears sufficient, as roads encourage erosion and the spread of weeds and vermin, not to mention fire and litter. Roads also reduce the chance of obtaining a wilderness experience.

Horse-riding can provide a wilderness experience. The presence of horses, however, leads to a deterioration of natural qualities, as walkers well know. One of those qualities is pure water, and the quality of water in the Victorian Alps is frequently open to question. Consider the warnings on drinking water at Macalister Springs near Mt Howitt. Contamination of alpine streams also has a wider effect—the alpine catchments supply 25% of Victoria's water needs. Neither cattle nor horses contribute to good water quality. Neither cattle nor horses have hooves appropriate to the fragile alpine environment.

In Kosciusko National Park, separately designated areas are set aside for the riding of horses and for wilderness. In Victoria there are 13 operators who are licensed to take horse

parties into National Parks. In the region of the Bluff and Bluff Hut, which is part of the proposed Alpine National Park, operators do not require a licence. This is arguably one of the most interesting parts of the alps, yet there is clear evidence of loss of land quality. This results from the yarding and movement of horses and the activities of a commercial tour group, which has encouraged increased use of this fragile area.

Extensive yarding areas exist at Bluff Hut where one commercial operator has extraordinary rights of access and occupancy on public land. Not only are the yards largely devoid of ground cover, but a swathe over 400 metres long has been bulldozed through snow gums on the spur behind the hut. In nearby areas traffic from horse tours has caused serious erosion. In places, gullies half a metre deep have been created. If this were not sufficient pressure, the tour group concerned has a permit to operate an over-snow vehicle along a closed public road in winter.

The future and what you can do

Careful management is essential to deal with the pressures mentioned above. CFL has recently addressed this in the publication of *Alpine Area Proposed Management Plans* (see Reviews, page 71). These are open for public comment and should be assessed by interested parties. Pressure should be applied to ensure adequate remote areas are included, that areas under intense pressure (such as the Bluff) are protected, and that practices within the

park are compatible with nature conservation and natural heritage values. Public input is essential.

Kosciusko National Park is also threatened by a range of environmentally damaging activities.



The Victorian Alps need to be properly managed as one cohesive unit. They also need to be inscribed in legislation, in order to minimize the occurrence of some of the excesses described above. Only legislative protection and National Park status puts the area beyond the whims of a change of government or minister.

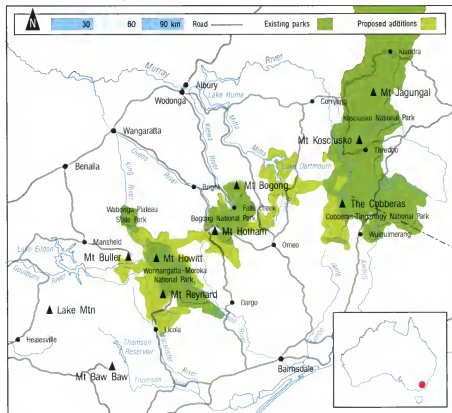
The Victorian Alpine National Park will only become a reality if the Liberal Party lends its support. The park stood out as the greatest difference in the nature conservation policies of the major parties at the last State election. It is currently before a Liberal policy committee, and Liberal politicians need to be persuaded as to the good political and environmental sense in supporting the legislation. Write to Jeff Kennett, Leader of the Opposition, Parliament House, Melbourne, Victoria 3002 if the alpine legislation has not been passed by the time you read this article.

The Victorian, NSW and ACT authorities must be encouraged to support the WHNP and the relevant government leaders should hear community feeling on this subject. World Heritage Nomination is a long, but worthwhile, process.

In the meantime, go and enjoy it. ▲

Doug Humann teaches politics and geography part time and is a househusband. He is Chairman of the VNPA Alpine Committee. He enjoys bushwalking and other outdoor activities with his young family.

Australian Alps



Wild Climbing

Affair With a Beautiful Daughter

An ascent of Pumori, by Jeff Williams



▲ THE AUSTRALIAN ASCENT OF PUMORI (7,161 metres), the Khumbu region of Nepal's 'beautiful daughter', started at a party at my house in Canberra. After a great deal of beer and at a late hour, four rock- and ice-climbers headed to Guthega to climb Watsons Crags. There was that other Mike Law named Smith, Richard Howes, me and an ageing Italian who purported to have climbed with Ricardo Cassin.

This group formed the nucleus of the expedition team which left for Nepal almost five years later. Contact had waned, but the common interest in expeditions kept the thin cord of correspondence stretched over that time. Pumori was booked in 1986 during a visit to the Ministry of Tourism in Kathmandu. I asked the punctilious and officious Nepali the name of the peak in the photograph behind him.

'Pumori—well I'll take that if it's available for post-monsoon 1988.'

'It will cost you.'

'I've got plenty of time to organize it. See you in '88.'

'Don't forget to send an advance asap!'

I cranked up the typewriter and started contacting friends. This climb would consist of people I knew personally, to avoid the usual conflicts which arise. As is usual, the most enthusiastic responses came from those who had no real intention of joining, with lacklustre replies from those who eventually did. When we left for Pumori, the expedition consisted of a brace of mountain guides (Richard Howes from Canada and Scott Woolums of Oregon, USA), an Australian Italian marble mason, Armando Corvini (at 48, the eldest member, thus nicknamed Dolomiti Grandpapa), a policeman, Andrew Lock, alias 'Snorts', who took on the thankless task of equipment officer, an energetic when-outside-the-office public servant, Ray Vran, who proved to be a frustrated doctor and became 'the lady with the lamp' to the locals, a cocktail waiter named Tom Cruise (Matt Godbold actually) from the Sydney beach suburb of Coogee, and me.

A motley collection of seven fresh-faced climbers and their entourage arrived at Tribhuvan Airport on 12 September. One of the best parts of a trip to Nepal is the expression on the faces of first-timers as they take a cab in to the city; a look of Third World shock and continual strings of oohs and aahs.

Using the guest-house in Thamel and the agency car-park, just off Kantipath, as base we set about getting the juggernaut mobile. Inertia is a difficult force to overcome when trying to move an expedition out of Kathmandu and in to the foothills. While the Sherpas (Kipa, Gyaltsen, Sherku, Tenze—all from Solu district) organized kitchen, food and transport, we sifted through a vast array of gear. Fuelled by cappuccino and beer,



Above. Pumori from the south. The route follows the ridge facing the camera. **Left.** Armando Corvini above Camp Two. Ray Vran

we approached this task diligently, as every kilogram meant less to spend on our greedy selves. The speakers were set up nearby and pumped out Bachelors from Prague, some ambience (Not Drowning Waving), The Cure, Uriah Heep (Richard's choice) and some northern beach music for homesick Matt. The main reason, however, was to drown the cacophony of Hindi music which wailed from loudspeakers at strategic corners in Kathmandu.

The flight into Lukla is one of the wonders of the aviation world. The panorama of Himalayan giants is

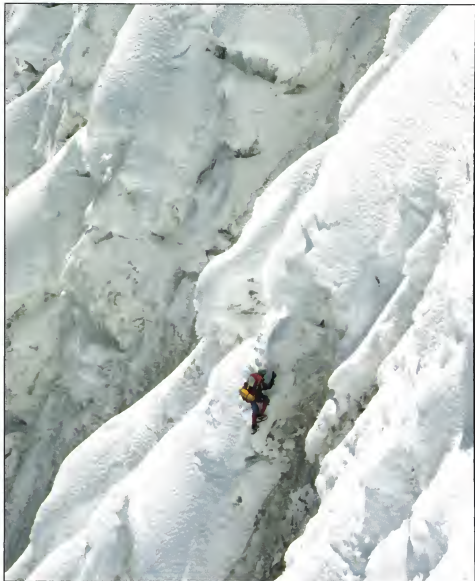
compensation for the terrifying landing when the pilot turns right, heads for the hillsides then salvages a touchdown out of apparent nothingness. That over, you can settle in to mountain-slow-mode as the expedition caravan, consisting of porters then yaks, wends towards Base Camp. An atmosphere something like that of the Canterbury Tales pervaded as our group, gathered from all professions, journeyed and explored in a spirit of jollity. Modern-day Marco Polos with Walkmans! Namche Bazaar, Tyangboche, Pengboche, Dingboche, Periche, Lobuche and Gorak Shep.

Our first view of the 'beautiful daughter' (so named in 1921 by Mallory after his young daughter, Clare) was

from a hill behind Lobuche. It stood proud and awesome in the moonlight—this is serious, Mum! I called the group and we sat in silence, punctuated by the odd gasp of disbelief and fear. Armando stuttered in English (an unfamiliar tongue): 'It is beautiful bu...but I think that it could be very da...dangerous too, ma...mate!' I muttered agreement while the nausea of cowardice gathered in my throat. Time for the brave face and casual bonhomie of 'Let's not be beaten before we start, this is a piece of cake'. Hard when you yourself are not convinced. And not helped by Scott—an accomplished mountaineer with an international reputation—'Wow, this looks like a really tough route (pronounced rowt), similar to the Cassin on McKinley'.

The next day dawned clear, fulfilling the promise made by the second head lama at Tyangboche during the mountain blessing ceremony. Four days 'pani pourri' then 'ek mina din rumo' (four days of bad weather followed by a month of good conditions). He proved to be spot on. After savouring the kitchen smells and banter at Lobuche, we moved up to our Base Camp, on the moraine to the right of Kala Pattar. Here we erected a camp, and in no time the Nepali two-triangled flag and the Australian flag fluttered side-by-side. The altitude of 5,300 metres affected people differently, but the tremendous surrounding peaks soothed some of the discomfort. As we ate our evening meal, a single star topped the pinnacle summit of Nuptse. Fitting, as it was Scott's birthday, an occasion demanding good karma. Gyaltsen, for the first time, failed miserably in his attempt to create a chocolate cake and we tucked into a sludge which looked like uncooked brownies.

Across the Khumbu, the mountain Olympics were under way (coinciding with Seoul), and various national teams had set up their incongruous 'games



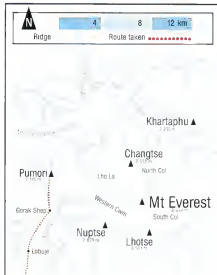
Above, Richard Howes negotiating ice cauliflowers between Camp One and Camp Two. **Right,** Howes, left, and Corvini receive their success katas from Sherpas Tenze and Kipa. Jeff Williams

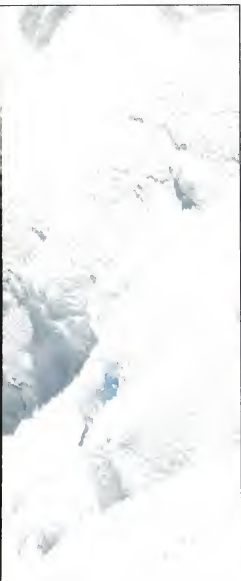
village' next to the huge ice sails of the lower part of the main icefall. For the next two months they would pit themselves against the highest peak in the world, sparing neither expense, life nor equipment. A large Parisian insurance company had outlaid \$US2 million so that armchair climbers in France could have 15 days of live coverage. The energetic and diminutive Marc Batard, there with a rival TV crew, was eager to be the first athlete to go from Base Camp to summit in less than 24 hours. He made it in 22 hours 20 minutes, but not before the legendary Sundare Sherpa (Everest summit five times) had departed after an argument. When I congratulated Batard, he enquired about the peak we were attempting. 'Pumoree—last year I took only 15 hours to make ascent. *Il est facile*.' Thanks Marc! The American North-west Expedition was there to test the performance levels of various types of athletes at altitude, and apparently

hoped to get the first American woman and a negro male to the summit. Added to these groups were another French expedition, Czechoslovakians, New Zealanders, Spaniards and Koreans. The drug testers were notably absent from these Olympics and no team members were sent home for using amphetamines or supplementary oxygen. Left behind were three Sherpas and four Czechs. Tragically, one of the Sherpas was Narayan Shrestha who had participated in previous Australian expeditions.

Climbing at this location and altitude is intense, and the expedition becomes all-consuming as the mountain slowly envelops your personality. There is no respite from the surrounds—brown and grey below and, as you lift your gaze, a symphony in white. From left to right, a cast familiar to all players in this dangerous drama—Lingtren, Khumbutse, Changtse, Everest, Lhotse, Nuptse, Baruntse, Mehra, Mera, Pokhalde, Ama Dablam, Kangtega, Tramskeru, Jobo Laptshan (Cholatse), Tawachee—and at their sides, cascading rivers of ice.

Pumori





As we ascended the fixed ropes each day, we engaged in a race against the sun, because the mountainside turns into a furnace, with blinding reflection and a downward torrent of ice and debris. It became necessary to climb early in the morning (about 4 am), with the hope that Camp One, on the ridge, would be reached before the face became too dangerous. Camp One became the staging post for equipment going higher up. We all did a number of carries to this point, and from here a difficult portion of the route (the circumvention of two imposing gendarmes) was achieved. The climbing to Camp One and above was difficult and the snow conditions added a significant degree of danger. The view was stunning but tempered by its precarious location among unstable snow mushrooms. Sadly, the debris of previous expeditions was in evidence everywhere and the daughter's neck was festooned with a many-stranded seven millimetre necklace.

The South Ridge, the direct continuation up from Kala Pattar, is a classic alpine feature eagerly pursued

by climbing purists. At 3.30 pm on 10 October, two such purists stood on the summit of Purni. Shiva was kind that day and only spoiled the ambience for Ray and Scott with occasional gusts of wind. I watched their minuscule forms through a pair of high-powered binoculars and felt a shared joy.

The next day, I moved up to Camp One from our glacier camp (Advance Base Camp). I was seized by panic, albeit controlled, as Armando and Richard were well above Camp Two and had spent the night bivouacked in a snow cave, without a stove or sleeping bags.

murmured thanks, to whom I'm not sure, and fell into a deep sleep.

Next morning I picked out two forms through the binoculars, and the sickening fear that the mountain had consumed them disappeared. That they survived was a miracle as Armando, stupefied by altitude and exhaustion, dropped their rope and it was Richard's cool recovery of some fixed line that enabled them to come down. I greeted them as prodigal sons, feeding them and attempting to administer as many life-giving fluids as possible. Armando had no feeling in his feet, so we had to



Rest that evening in the snow scrape was fitful, and the two climbers realized that time moves slowly and cruelly in these circumstances. Slowly but surely the vengeful character of Shiva was beginning to surface. At 12.20 pm on 11 October, Armando and Richard stood on the plateau-like summit and were permitted the opportunity of gazing into the chocolate landscape of Tibet, an antithesis to the Nepalese side of the Himalayas.

Meanwhile at Camp One I was gripped by a secret fear that something had gone awfully wrong, and I rehearsed explanations about the potential tragedy for their relatives. Andrew and Matt prepared their equipment in silence; they too were worried about the fate of our friends. Purni is a peak which does not permit mistakes, and rescue is complicated by steepness and the complexity of the route. That evening, at about 8 pm, I saw what I thought was a torch light in the vicinity of Camp Two. I

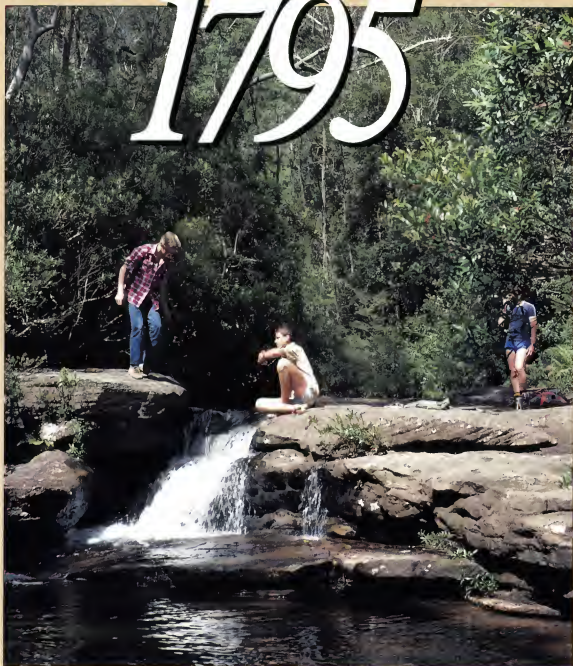
get him down as quickly as we could. Four of our group had been permitted to stand on the summit of Purni and return. The Sherpas, who believe that 'one person, one group, no one killed' is success, now considered it over. I agreed.

On 19 October, two members of the Anglo-Icelandic expedition were killed, possibly descending the South Ridge of Purni. The clouds rushed across the summits of Lhotse and Everest, the lower hills were enveloped in mist—that evening Everest briefly turned to gold. The Games were over, the Olympic flame had been extinguished. Armando was going home on the back of a yak. We were returning to civilization. The tender Buddhist spirit of the Khumbu died for me in 1988 and, sadly, I had been a willing participant and witness. ▲

Jeff Williams became actively interested in mountaineering in the early 1980s and has climbed extensively in New Zealand, North America and the Himalayas. He currently lives in Melbourne.

INTO THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

1795



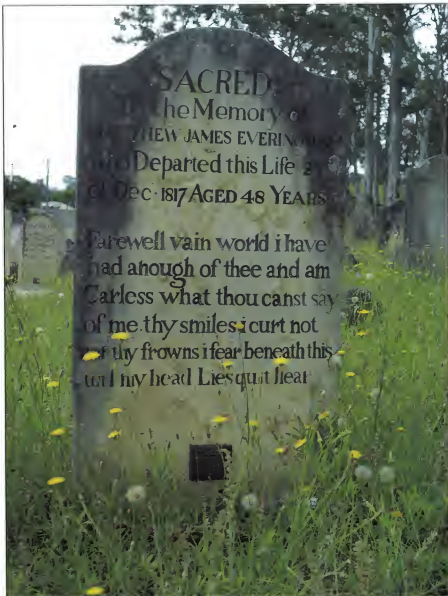
Historical detective work in the bush, with *Greg Powell*

It was frightful to look down the dreadful precipice. It made the beholder giddy. No mortal I am sure could ever cross it. We gazed at it a while with awful reverence of that God, by whom all things were made.

▲ THIS DRAMATIC DESCRIPTION OF AN encounter with the rugged Blue Mountains, west of Sydney, was written in 1795. The author was Matthew James Everingham who had arrived in the colony as a First Fleet convict in the transport *Scarborough* in 1788. Upon his release, he was granted land in the Hawkesbury district in sight of the barrier range now known as the Blue Mountains.

Letters written by Matthew Everingham were re-discovered in Victoria in 1981 by an alert librarian. They had been in the University of Melbourne archives for 17 years, put there by their owner, Robin Ritchie of Blackwood Station, in the western district of Victoria. Some of the letters describe an attempt to cross the Blue Mountains by Everingham and two companions, John Ramsay and William Reid, in 1795, 18 years before the successful crossing by Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson. Researcher, Val Ross (*The Everingham Letterbook*, Anvil Press, 1985) called upon the services of a wide range of people to verify the letters. It seemed that the only way to check the Blue Mountains section was to take Everingham's descriptions and to set out and follow his presumed path.

Most researchers were in agreement concerning the route of the first section of the journey, so my three companions and I shouldered our packs on a cold winter's morning on Richmond Hill on the west bank of the Nepean River. It was near here that the 1795 trio began the second day of their epic trip, after walking the first day from Parramatta. They had taken a total of 13 days; our modern expedition would take 5 days (one way). We headed out along the road to Grose Vale with our sights set on the yawning mouth of the Grose Gorge. It was the only gap in the long green ridge which formed the first rampart of the Blue Mountains. Everingham's descriptions were to prove both excitingly precise and frustratingly



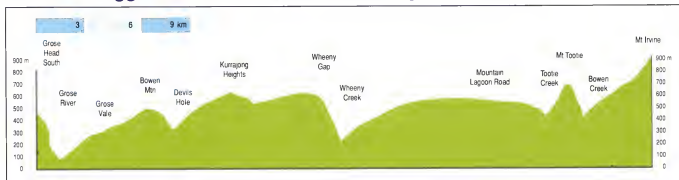
Above. Matthew Everingham's grave in Wilberforce Cemetery, in view of the Blue Mountains. (Note the First Fleet plaque at the foot of the headstone.) **Opposite.** a rest stop at Tootie Creek. All photos Greg Powell

vague; however, they showed a deep appreciation for the terrain and conditions.

The historic trio were aghast at the sight that lay before them when they reached the gorge at Vale Look-out. They turned abruptly northward away from the gorge, and so did we. Our route

now led towards Bowen Mountain; still a hard climb even with the benefit of roads. We were glad to collapse in the grass near the top and take in the vista of the vast Cumberland Plain, stretching to the Centrepoint Tower on the horizon. Everingham wrote that he could view the sea from here, as well as the different settlements and the windings of the river. He then described a 'deep cut of water' that lay in their path. This turned out to be the deep gully of Devils Hole Creek

Profile of suggested route of Matthew Everingham—1795



that bisects the range between Kurralong and Bowen Mountain. He camped in this gorge on his third night out. We made our first camp here, in a cave by the banks of Tabaraga Rill. On a nearby rock slab were half a dozen grooves where people who truly knew and appreciated these mountains once sharpened their stone implements.

Like the former party, we started our northerly ascent early, but with the advantage of a fire track didn't have to hack through thick undergrowth. Our route led us through Kurralong Heights and out along the ridge towards Wheeny Gap. Wildflowers were beginning to paint the ridge with colour and our day was very pleasant, until the ridge suddenly ended. All around, the ground dropped away in to the gorge of Wheeny Creek, 300 metres below. Everingham wrote, 'We found after about three hours' search a place to descent [sic] with safety. We went for the night into a cliff of a rock'.

We also picked our way down in to the gorge, as it had to be crossed if a westward route was to be followed. Our way through the sandstone ledges took us to a large cave, similar to Everingham's 'clift of rock'. The explorers experienced a frightening thunderstorm here, and from what we could see of the towering cliffs all around, a storm raging through the gorge would certainly be a memorable experience. The location of the cave seemed to confirm that we were indeed following Everingham's path, though researchers differ as to the exact route from here onwards.

Our second night's camp was made in idyllic surroundings beside a waterfall on Wheeny Creek. Our final day was to be the warmest, but luckily we attempted



Above, campsite on Wheeny Creek

the western climb early in the morning. The ascent was steep and scrubby, but the views rewarding. Eventually we reached the Mountain Lagoon Road, where Everingham probably spent his sixth night. Our time was up, so it was back to Newcastle to plan the second stage of the expedition. We were happy with the result of the first stage and a few weeks later returned, with one more recruit.

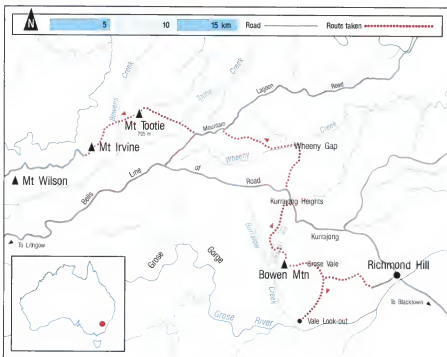
Flannel flowers and waratahs blanketed the ridge as we pushed westward towards Tootie Creek. With careful negotiation of the cliffines and scrub barriers we reached the rocky floor of the valley by mid-morning. The cool waters of Tootie Creek refreshed us

before the long ascent to Mt Tootie. Our route led up a spur towards Little Tootie and then on to the clear summit of Mt Tootie itself. We had lunch on the summit and marvelled at the magnificent vista. The entire route lay before us, from the Grose Gorge, along the Kurralong Heights to the massive Wheeny Gap, then the ridges and gullies that snaked to our feet at Mt Tootie. Behind was Bowen Creek Gorge and our final objective, Mt Irvine. Everingham wrote of this section of the journey: 'We were determined to strike out of the brush and take a direct course and instead of brush it was deep rocky valleys we had to climb up and down'.

We climbed down into our next rocky valley, Bowen Creek, and eventually found a reasonable patch of sandy ground to camp. Light rain fell during the night, and the morning saw all the mountains shrouded in mist. The light drizzle kept us cool as we began our final ascent to Mt Irvine. After an hour, the barren sandstone gave way to lush vegetation on the basalt cap of Mt Irvine. The road walk beneath the dripping trees was a very pleasant way to conclude our trip. We had a car waiting to take us back to civilization. Everingham, Reid and Ramsay had to retrace their steps on the long return journey to Parramatta.

The trio had most probably ended their attempt to cross the Blue Mountains on Mt Irvine or Mt Wilson, judging from the description of the countryside in Everingham's letters. He wrote, 'I wished much to go over and explore that barren track of land, but our provisions grew very short and we're obliged to bend our thoughts towards home'. Little would they know that the city of Lithgow would one day rise just a little beyond that 'barren track of land'. ▲

Blue Mountains



Greg Powell (see Contributors in Wild no 8) is a District Venturer Leader with West Newcastle District, New South Wales. He specializes in historical bushwalking, researching and retracing the routes of early Australian explorers. Many of these trips are described in his book *Bushwalking in the Blue Mountains* (Rigby, 1988).

Magic RIVER



Mark Tregellas paddles a mysterious northern river

▲ IT'S BEEN THE DRIEST WET FOR 20 years, proclaimed the ageing tin miner, as he helped load our gear on to an old Toyota Landcruiser. With the sound of the twin-engined Britton Islander fading in the distance, I looked around at the old station's buildings and the tiny grass landing strip. Everywhere the ground was covered in a thick carpet of lush, green

vegetation. Hundreds of colourful wildflowers speckled the landscape, and a warm breeze carried their scents to us, beneath a cloudless, blue sky. It was beautiful. I sat in the back of the Toyota as we bumped along the winding dirt track, and briefly thought of the city. Alarm clocks on dark cold mornings, hurried breakfasts, tightly packed trains full of newspapers, perfumes and after-shave lotions. The people, the work, the pressure. Suddenly we stopped and I looked up and saw the river. It was two

Above, first view of the river. All photos Mark Tregellas

months before I again thought of the city. The sun went down on that first day as we had dinner sitting on the river's moss-covered banks, watching the flow of water we would follow to the sea. The old tin miner had been right, for the river was very low. But we were in its headwaters, and even the thought of walking the canoe along for a week wasn't unappealing. The river slowly snaked its way northward, very shallow



Above, a typical campsite. **Right top,** 'It's tough at the top'; on the upper river. **Right bottom,** sting-ray.

and quite wide. Huge trees lay across at regular intervals, deposited by hurricanes and wet-season floods. At times we would see enormous chunks of wood suspended ten metres above our heads, entangled in other forest giants. The log tangles slowed us down. If we couldn't squeeze the canoe through or clear a path with an axe, we'd portage. Several times that first week the rain forest echoed with the sound of the axe as we took turns cutting through the driftwood, getting blisters on our hands.

Each day we'd stop very early, around 3 pm, and set up camp. Good firewood proliferated, so after the canoe was unloaded and the billy put on to boil, there was plenty of time to explore, fish or just relax and lie in the river. We never tired of watching it those first few weeks. The colour reminded me of liquid gold, as iron pyrites in its sandy bed sparkled in the sunshine. I hardly ever drank water at home, but here I couldn't get enough.

The river changed a lot in those first weeks. At times, when it was wide and shallow, we walked. Our feet grew hard and calloused and we eventually

discarded our shoes altogether. In some places the river narrowed and the rain-forest-clad banks gave way to volcanic rock. Here, the river turned dark and brown and dropped to unknown depths. We'd drift silently along, casting lines into the shadows formed by overhanging rock ledges. Black bream, sariatoga, catfish and sooty grunters were always eager to take the bait and provide us with our evening meal. The elusive barramundi, unfortunately, stayed just that. We'd stand in the kayak and pole along watching fish dart out from the shadows, quick as lightning, chasing some smaller, even quicker prey. At night, we'd clean our dishes down by the water's edge and watch hundreds of tiny fish and freshwater yabbies come within centimetres of our fingers for the scraps from our plates.

The hundreds of birds that we met along the way never failed to amaze and amuse us. Sulphur-crested and great palm cockatoos screeched their greetings each morning and afternoon. Blue-winged kookaburras, azure kingfishers and white-headed sea eagles watched from branches as we paddled slowly past. One night we camped next to a still pool at the bottom of a small

waterfall. I was sitting next to the camp fire with a rich cup of Milo liberally laced with Bundaberg rum. The fish were making so much noise, splashing around, that I didn't hear anything while a large freshwater tortoise walked into the firelight and sat down next to me. I greeted the tortoise and hoped it didn't mind having two humans camped on what was obviously its patch of turf. The tortoise looked up at me with those little black eyes, blinked, and scurried off into the pool.

The next day we stood on top of a gorge and watched the waterfall drop away below us. It wasn't marked on the map, and we wondered how a waterfall spilling over ten metres could have escaped the cryptographs. The place just begged to be explored. We fossicked for gem stones at the base of the fall. A large blow-hole acted as a super Jacuzzi, and the fish nearby seemed to want to be caught. The gorge was formed out of the same dark-coloured volcanic cliffs which we'd previously seen on the river. One side of the gorge opened out in to huge sand dunes, a brilliant snowy white. The other side was mainly open forest and it was here that we discovered the caves. They



grew as it swam up, out of the water, to nibble some plants at my feet. It was so tame that I bent forward and touched its leathery back. Not much further downstream we spotted a small shark slowly swimming upriver. Once the river became tidal, we had to change our

The closer we got to the ocean, the harder things became. Four metre tides on the ebb left 400 metres of oyster-saturated mud-flats which tore our skin to shreds as we dragged the kayak to shore, only to be eaten by sand flies and mosquitoes. Suddenly the river ended



appeared to have been created from flood- and rain-water wearing away the volcanic rock. The ones we found were only small, but not being equipped for exploring caves we decided against trying to push them any further.

That night, above the roar of the water, we heard a dingo howling in the distance. The next day as we were paddling along, I looked up and saw a pair of them watching. For over an hour they followed us along the bank, their interest as blatant as ours in them. We didn't ever have to paddle long without seeing wildlife of one type or another. Cattle, horses and pigs were everywhere and both scrub turkeys and plains turkeys watched from every bend. Big scrub bulls took great delight in scaring us witless by charging out of the scrub, just to make it clear who's boss. Some nights we could see the eyes of Johnstone River crocodiles reflected in our torchlights.

Gradually the river became wider and deeper, but we never ceased being surprised. We had stopped for lunch almost 300 kilometres from the sea. I was lying in the sun with a cup of tea when a sting-ray, almost a metre across, swam the river towards me. My surprise

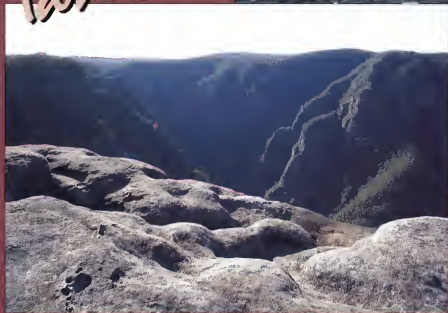
camping habits. No more riverside camping on gently sloping sand dunes, or batching and getting water from the same place. The river was now a muddy colour and wide enough for islands to form in its middle. Although constantly on the look-out for saltwater crocodiles, we only had one show any interest. It was about four metres in length and swam to within three metres of the kayak. A crab pot provided us with gourmet breakfasts, as the fish we could now catch were too big for the two of us to eat.

and the ocean lay before us. The trip had come to an end. Some local Aborigines gave us a lift back to town, where I booked in to the local hospital as my legs had become infected from oyster cuts. I lay in my hospital bed and thought about the river. There are several like it through northern Australia. All will be unique to whoever spends the time exploring and all will reward with experiences to be treasured forever. ▲

Mark Tregollas is a Melbourne policeman with a love of wilderness adventure. His exploits have taken him down remote rivers in many parts of the world.



Ian Brown



Left, Kanangra Gorge.
Above, river oaks,
Murrumbidgee Creek. All
photos were taken in
the Blue Mountains,
New South Wales.





*Above, Mt Hay, Grose Valley.
Right, canyon near Newnes
Plateau.*





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The Bogong High Plains

A wealth of ski touring possibilities, by *Glenn van der Knijff*

Track Notes



▲ BOGONG NATIONAL PARK ENCOMPASSES the largest tract of high country in Victoria. Established in 1981, the park contains most of the State's highest peaks (including Mt Bogong, Mt Feathertop and Mt Nelse) and the Bogong High Plains. With much of the terrain above 1,600 metres in elevation, snow falls regularly and reliably during the winter months, making the park an ideal venue for snow sports, including cross country skiing.

The mountains of Bogong National Park were first skied in the early 1920s by miners and bushwalkers who wanted to experience the alpine nature of the mountains. They endured long, arduous journeys to reach the region and faced an exhausting ski, laden down with heavy packs and primitive gear. Their skis were planks called snow shoes, and only one pole, instead of stocks, was used as a brake.

Many people still believe that a winter wilderness experience in these mountains requires a similar journey. This is not so. Much of Bogong National Park can be experienced in day tours from the alpine resorts of Falls Creek and Mt Hotham.

Cross country skiing within the park is generally easy. The open snow-plains, lightly wooded trails and clear, exposed ridges facilitate travel. Don't take these mountains lightly, however, as fog, snow or rain can rapidly turn a pleasant, sunny afternoon into a raging blizzard—skiers have died in these mountains, as numerous memorial plaques scattered about the park testify.

The Alpine Walking Track (AWT), which extends from Walhalla to Canberra, passes through the snow-covered region of Bogong National Park and is a popular route followed by many touring parties. Sections of the AWT

Above, the author at Kelly's Hut. Glenn van der Knijff collection

can be incorporated into many day tours—so can the many historic huts scattered alongside or not far from the track.

The routes described here include some of the most interesting day ski-tours in the park. Most are of medium distance and can be covered easily in a day by an intermediate, moderately fit ski tourist. Extra notes are included for fit and experienced skiers to assist them to ski further than the 'medium' distance. All tours feature superb views, places of interest and huts steeped in historical character.

Maps. The Algona Publications *Falls Creek—Mt Nelse—Bogong High Plains* and *Mt Bogong* sheets are particularly useful. Both contain track notes as well as basic forest

OFTEN CHALLENGED NEVER SURPASSED



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44 mm	43-44	44	44	44	49-47-48	49-47-41	54-49-52	53-50-53	52	60-52-57	62-54-59	68-56-60	72-69-64

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guides. The Vicmap 1:25,000 series maps are more than suitable, but five maps are needed to cover the areas described (Cope, *Fainter, Feathertop, Harrietteville and Nelse*). The Soil Conservation Authority's series of four *Bogong High Plains* vegetation maps are also very useful as they have a detailed 1:15,000 scale. (The multitude of colours used to represent the vegetation communities can be confusing, however.)

Access. Falls Creek, centrally located on the western extremity of the Bogong High Plains, is 377 kilometres from Melbourne by way of Bright and Mt Beauty. Mt Hotham, at the southern end of the park, is 367 kilometres from Melbourne, by way of Bright and Harrietteville. Alternatively, Mt Hotham can be reached by way of Bairnsdale and Omeo.

All necessary facilities, including parking, toilets and food, are available at the resorts. Parking is not cheap—currently \$12 a day. Chains must be carried to both resorts throughout winter. For a full update on road and snow conditions, phone (03) 11 545 (Melbourne), (057) 58 3366 (Falls Creek) or (057) 59 3531 (Mt Hotham).

Tours. All of the described tours can be varied to suit the experience of the party—shortened to suit a slower group or extended and, perhaps, linked to another to suit fitter, more accomplished cross country skiers.

Before heading out on any of the ski tours, check local weather forecasts, and 'let someone know before you go'. During winter, sunny days tend to cloud over in the afternoon, so plan to set out no later than 9 am and to return by 4 pm to beat the ice-up. Carry plenty of food, chocolate, clothing and don't forget your camera. Good skiing!

Fitzgeralds and Kellys Huts (20 kilometres return)

Leave the Windy Corner Car-park at Falls Creek and ski up the Bogong High Plains Tourist Road, past the Nordic Bowl, to Rocky Tourist Dam. Walk or ski across the dam wall. On the far side, sign the intentions book, then follow a pole line up the slope and away from the road.

Where the slope levels out, veer north, away from the poles, keeping as high on the ridge as possible, until Heathy Spur is reached. At most times, ski tracks are numerous and route finding is easy.

Ski down to a creek, turn right, and bear east-north-east through open plains and snow gum woodland, slowly gaining altitude.

The exposed tops of Heathy Spur provide the best views (Mt Nelse to the north and Rocky Valley to the south). In foggy conditions, navigation along this part of the route can be difficult due to the lack of snow poles or prominent features.

From a high point, ski south-easterly down a long, gentle slope into the open expanse of the Park. One pole line, the Hotham-Bogong Pole Line, will be crossed and another, which disappears over the saddle between Hollands Knob and Marns Point, will be picked up. Follow this subsidiary pole line over gentle terrain for about two kilometres until a sign, in a grove of snow gums, indicates the routes to Fitzgeralds Hut to the south-west and Kellys Hut to the north-east, both about 400 metres from this point.

Locating Fitzgeralds Hut is easy—a pole line leads to the door—finding Kellys Hut, however, can be difficult. From the signpost, follow the fence line for about 100 metres. Ski slightly to the east, pass through an old cattle yard, then continue in a north-easterly direction, down the slope. Kellys Hut will be found at the bottom of the slope, amongst open snow gums.

Whiterock Creek, to a pole junction at pole number 916. From this junction, ski down to Ropers Hut, 100 metres west of pole 936, or follow the older pole line north-west to the top of Timms Spur, two kilometres distant, for line views of Mt Bogong (1,986 metres).

From Mt Nelse, ski back to the Park, and thence to Falls Creek by Heathy Spur or Watchbed Creek. If time permits, two huts



Above, Mt Bogong beyond Timms Spur. Glenn Tempest

When returning to Falls Creek, follow the outward route to the Park. Ski back along Heathy Spur or, alternatively, follow the pole line until it joins the Hotham-Bogong Pole Line, and the AWT, near the head of Watchbed Creek at pole number 740. Follow the poles down Watchbed Creek, ignoring the pole line heading south (the AWT), until the tourist road is reached. Ski along the groomed road back to Falls Creek.

Mt Nelse (18 kilometres return)

Follow the above route, from Falls Creek, to the Park. Head north and follow the Hotham-Bogong Pole Line, initially along level ground, then up the south face of Mt Nelse, until the route levels out at pole number 818. The trigonometric point on the summit will be seen 500 metres to the east. The views from Mt Nelse (1,882 metres) are amongst the most extensive in the park—Mt Cope and Mt Hotham to the south, Mt Feathertop, Mt Fainter and Mt Buffalo to the west, Mt Bogong to the north, and to the east Mt Wills and the distant snow-capped Main Range in New South Wales.

Experienced skiers may like to continue northward, along the pole line, past Mt Nelse North (1,884 metres) and the head of

(Edmondsons and Johnstons) can be visited prior to reaching the Park on the return journey.

Mt Spion Kopje (30 kilometres return)

Probably too far for most skiers to call a day trip, this tour provides extensive views along the exposed Spion Kopje Spur.

Ski to Mt Nelse, then on to Mt Nelse North along the Hotham-Bogong Pole Line. At a major bend in the pole line, head west, through a gate and up a small rise to a high point on Spion Kopje Spur. This high point is actually the third-highest peak in Victoria, 1,891 metres above sea-level, and is unofficially named Mt Steadfast.

Ski due west down a long, but not steep, slope to a disused aqueduct, then up a gentle two kilometre rise to the summit of Mt Spion Kopje (1,837 metres). There are no prominent features, apart from the aqueduct, along Spion Kopje Spur, so be extremely careful if the weather closes in.

Cope and Wallaces Huts (16 kilometres return)

Leave the Windy Corner Car-park and follow the tourist road to the Nordic Bowl. Turn south at a signposted intersection just past the bowl, then follow a pole line and track into Sun Valley.

About 500 metres past the last ski tow, the poles cross over a stream. Do not follow the

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poles but head south, tracing the stream uphill. A line of disused telegraph poles will be seen to the west. On reaching the ridge, ski south-easterly (without losing too much height) for three kilometres until the tourist road and Hotham-Bogong Pole Line is met. At this point (pole number 533), the re-routed AWT and pole line branches east away from the older pole line and road, to follow a fire track to Langfords West Aqueduct.

Proceed along the pole line past Cope Hut, the only hut on the High Plains built specifically for ski tourists, to the aqueduct and Rover Lodge. From the lodge, the aqueduct is piped and provides pleasant skiing for 800 metres to where the aqueduct reappears. Cross the pipeline here and ski north, through a small but rather thick forest of snow gums to a little snow plain. Alternatively, ski a little further to a foot-bridge and cross here. Head west, up a slight grade, to Wilkinsons Lodge.

Ski north-north-west from the hut for 300 metres, gaining height through open snow gums, to Wallace's Hut. The oldest hut on the plains, Wallace's was built in 1889 and was known as the 'Seldom Seen Inn' by early skiers due to its location amongst old, twisted snow gums.

A pole line (the old AWT) heads south-west, then west from Wallace's until the tourist road is again reached. Cross the road and ski north-west, over a slight grade and through open snow plains and forested ridges, to the eastern peak of Rocky Knobs. Views are somewhat limited here but are more impressive and widespread from the northern-most peak, 700 metres away.

From this viewpoint, ski north-west and downhill to a fire track near Rocky Valley Dam. The snow gum forest is not unduly thick so skiing is easy. Follow the fire track south-westerly to the stream, cross it, and continue along the pole line to Sun Valley and Windy Corner.

Tawonga Huts (22 kilometres return)

Park at Falls Creek and walk, or ski, up the village roads and home trails to the top of the Frying Pan Spur. Ski beneath a T-bar tow and pick up the pole line heading south-west. Follow it past the top of the Ruined Castle to a pole junction on the top of a broad spur. The pole line heading west leads to Mt McKay (1,842 metres), 1.5 kilometres distant. Ignore this and proceed for one kilometre until a gate and a road come in to view. Leave the poles and ski south along the road to Pretty Valley Hut, which is just east of the road. Once an old SEC cubicle, the hut has been upgraded and a verandah has been added.

From the hut, the road is not visible initially so ski south-west, past another SEC hut, until the road winds its way down to Pretty Valley Pondage. The road ends at a causeway—the only easy crossing of Pretty Valley Creek—where a picnic table is located.

Cross the causeway and follow the Fainter Fire Track up a long gradual slope until the open tops are reached. If the track cannot be seen, bear west-south-west for about 1.5 kilometres and this point will be found. There are superb views here—Mt Feathertop, Mt Fainter and Mt Bogong dominate the skyline.

Continue south-west past the Ben Cooper Memorial to meet a pole line in a broad saddle, where the Fainter Spur leaves the Bogong

High Plains proper. Ski down along the pole line and fire track for one kilometre to Tawonga Huts, situated on the southern end of a small plain. Return to Falls Creek.

With an early start, say about 8 am, it is possible to ski to Mt Fainter and back in a day, as long as you reach Tawonga Huts by around 11 am. However, the extra distance (34 kilometres return to Falls Creek) requires fitness, proper clothing and extra food.

Leave Tawonga Huts and locate the Fainter Fire Track at the northern end of the plain where it contours round the hill. Ski along the track for four kilometres to Little Plain, where the track becomes indistinct. Ski northward through a grove of snow gums to another plain. Continue in a north-westerly direction, gaining altitude steadily, until the exposed top of Mt Fainter (1,883 metres) is just a short climb away. There are superb views in all directions—Mt Feathertop across the deeply cut West Kiwa valley is particularly rewarding. Return to Tawonga Huts and Falls Creek.

The Razorback (22 kilometres return)

The Razorback is one of the most scenic tours in Victoria but it can also be one of the most dangerous under certain conditions. The steep eastern faces are ice prone so exercise caution when skiing across these.

Park at Diamantina Hut, two kilometres from Hotham Heights, and then ski northward for one kilometre to the top of the Bon Accord Spur. Views here are outstanding—Mt Feathertop to the north, Mt Fainter and the

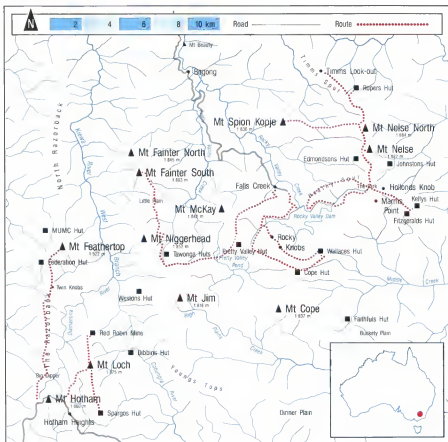
Bogong High Plains to the north-east and the distant Mt Howitt, Crosscut Saw and Mt Buller to the south-west. Proceed north-east, down an ever-increasing slope into a steep-sided saddle known as the Big Dipper.

From the saddle, traverse round the east side of a steep hill for about 800 metres until the ridge is reached. Skiing becomes easier as a long, gentle slope leads into a lower, treed portion of the Razorback. The woodland is occasionally thick, but route finding is not difficult—the snow-covered walking track is mostly prominent. When this gradual ascent begins to steepen, ski slightly to the east, and then north, until the Razorback again becomes open. Mt Feathertop, which has not been visible for the last three kilometres, looms invitingly ahead. From here the Razorback is high and exposed, with steep drops on both sides, particularly on the West Kiwa side.

Follow the ridge generally north to Twin Knobs, two small but significant peaks on the Razorback. Prior to reaching them, it may be necessary to walk rather than ski. Although short, this narrow and undulating section makes manoeuvring on skis difficult. Pass Twin Knobs and High Knob (another larger rise) on their western sides and through mostly dense snow gums.

Once past High Knob, where the Diamantina Spur leaves the Razorback on its descent to the West Kiwa River, the route to the summit of Mt Feathertop is seen. Ski along the ridge, gaining altitude steadily, until a few

Bogong High Plains



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Track Notes

old snow poles lead the way to the Molly Hill Cairn. Continue along the ridge and into a shallow saddle. Leave skis here before attempting the final climb (unless you are confident skiing on steep, narrow slopes). Climb up the exposed summit ridge to the top of Mt Feathertop (1,922 metres). Commanding views in all directions are had from the summit.

Walk or ski back down the summit ridge, keeping well clear of the infamous cornice to the east, and retrace your steps to Diamantina Hut.

Spargos Hut (11 kilometres return)

Leave the Loch Car-park and follow the Hotham-Bogong Pole Line, and AWT, over undulating terrain to the top of Marys Slide and the Charles Derrick Memorial Cairn. Ski northward down to a shallow, narrow saddle, known as Derrick Col, before climbing steeply to the edge of a gently sloping plain south of Mt Loch. Head northward, across the plain, then climb up round the large outcrops of polygonal basalt columns (evidence of volcanic cooling millions of years ago). You will be rewarded by splendid views in all directions from Mt Loch's summit (1,875 metres).

From the top, proceed south until the pole line is reached. Follow the line down the open plain to Derrick Hut, situated amongst snow gums near the top of Swindlers Spur. Locating Spargos Hut for the first time can be difficult. Climb to the top of the ridge 200 metres south of Derrick Hut. Ski downhill, bypassing a short but steep slope to the east, to level ground. Do not ski to the open saddle on the main ridge heading south. Instead, keep approximately 200 metres to the east and slide round the hill, through moderately thick snow gums, until more open forest is reached on the ridge about one kilometre from Derrick Hut. Continue downhill and along the ridge to Spargos Hut, 300 metres away. Spargos Hut was built in the 1930s by Bill Spargo, a Country Roads Board employee and later Hotham Heights Chalet manager, while he was prospecting for gold. Return to Derrick Hut and the Loch Car-park.

Red Robin Mine (11 kilometres return)

Ski along the Hotham-Bogong Pole Line to Mt Loch. From the summit, proceed northward along Machinery Spur to Red Robin Gap which is two kilometres distant over slowly descending terrain. There is a fire track along this section of the route but it is unlikely to be navigable until Red Robin Gap is approached. There are excellent views across the Diamantina River valley to Mt Feathertop along this part of the spur.

At the gap, locate the fire track heading south-east and ski along it to Red Robin Mine, located between the second and fourth hair-pin bends on the track.

Red Robin Mine is the culmination of many years of hard work by gold prospector, Bill Spargo, who discovered it in 1941. It is now operated occasionally throughout the summer months by miners from Mt Beauty. Do not tamper with any of the equipment or huts as the mine is privately owned. Return to Mt Loch and the Loch Car-park. ▲

Glenn van der Krijff, a keen cross country skier and alpine historian, regularly visits the high country of north-east Victoria. A qualified cartographer, he previously worked for local map and guidebook publisher Alpina Publications before joining our Wild staff early last year.



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Winter Tents

Keeping rain and snow out, with Simon Head

Wild Gear Survey



▲ DUE TO THE EXTREME CONDITIONS A TENT may well be subjected to in an Australian winter—namely huge, often wet snowfalls, gale-force winds and sub-zero temperatures—it has to be extremely strong and very weatherproof. Ideally, it should also be very light and compact, quick and easy to pitch and probably, above all, reasonably priced. The strength of a tent comes from the strength of its components: poles, fabrics and materials, as well as design, quality control and, most importantly, user experience and knowledge. All these hinge around one factor—quality.

Poles. The main criterion for this survey was that all the tents have aluminium-alloy poles. It is certainly true that there have been some very strong fibreglass poles put into tents in the past, and fibreglass poles have been used on Himalayan peaks with great success. However, it has been my experience (and that of many others) that fibreglass poles now available on the Australian market just can't hack it. What is worse, fibreglass poles don't just break, they shatter, and more often than not cut your tent to pieces in the process.

The alloy pole most commonly used in the better quality tents is the Easton alloy pole from the USA. The reason for this is that they

are the best quality lightweight tent poles available. Most Korean-manufactured tents come with poles similar in quality to that of the tent, although some, like the Salewa Sierra Dome, use better poles to improve their overall quality.

All tents surveyed have poles that are shock-corded together for easy assembly; this definitely makes life easier in bad conditions.

Design. There are four main design shapes used in the tents surveyed: tunnel, dome, A-frame and pyramid. The tunnel and dome designs give much more usable internal space because they have steeper side-walls, whereas the A-frame and pyramid designs have limited internal space because of their floor dimensions. The Alpine Meadows has combated this by adding a central hoop to its standard A-frame design.

Vestibules are the areas between the inner tent and the fly, created by an extension of the fly. Vestibules are invaluable for comfortable living, especially while weathering bad conditions. They provide a buffer zone when getting in to and out of the tent, allowing an area where dirty wet gear can be taken off and stored out of the weather and out of the inner. Vestibules are also the safest place to cook, if you have to cook out of the weather in the tent.

Above, high in the alps. Stephen Hamilton

Two vestibules are definitely better than one; gear can be stored in one, with the stove and cooking in the other.

Fabrics. All tents surveyed are 'double skinned' (an inner protected by a fly covering) with the exception of the Chouinard Megamid, which is a single-skin tent.

Inners are made from either unproofed nylon or nylon with a light coating of silicon or polyurethane. Certainly the unproofed nylon breathes better; however, in theory, lightly coated inners don't allow condensation on the fly to drip through the inner. A well-designed tent should not allow condensation to collect at any point above the inner—condensation should run down the inside of the fly and not drip on to the inner.

The floor of the inner should be the most waterproof coated material available. Floors are usually heavily coated with either neoprene or polyurethane. The construction of the floor is also a very important feature, a tub floor being the best as the floor effectively runs up the side wall, so joining seams are above ground level and are out of moisture on the ground. Unfortunately, even the best materials seem to eventually leak due to the

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heavy use a floor is put to. Recoating of floors with a liquid sealant is quite effective, although this does have to be done fairly regularly. Some manufacturers are quite happy to put a new floor into their tents if they are worn out or damaged.

Seam sealing has been indicated for both fly and fly in the table. If not carried out by the manufacturer, it is very important to seal all the seams on the fly and floor area, otherwise they will leak. Some provide seam sealant with the tent, otherwise there are quite a few brands on the market that are readily available. When sealing the seams, do not use too much sealant. It will crack and eventually peel off. Use just enough to cover the needle holes.

Pegs. Although all the tents surveyed are put on the market as four-season winter tents by the respective manufacturers, Wilderness Equipment is the only one to provide snow pegs. In snow, pegs with a large surface area are needed to give the holding power

necessary. Several good snow pegs are available and are a good investment. The measured weight in the table includes the pegs that are supplied with the tent, which may or may not be sufficient for snow use.

Ventilation is very important in any tent used during an Australian winter. The two main points to consider when trying to assess ventilation are probable build-up of condensation and fumes from cooking. Although all manufacturers warn against lighting a stove within the confines of a tent because of the risks of carbon monoxide poisoning and of burning your tent to the ground (both very real dangers), you will find that with a good stove and lots of common sense, cooking inside your tent (usually in the vestibule) can be relatively safe. The ideal ventilation system would provide for both fumes and condensation to be passed out of the tent before they become a problem.

Look for a tent with a good clearance between the inner and the fly, with the inner

connected to the fly in a way which allows free circulation of air between the two, unhindered by pole sleeves. Tents that have pole sleeves running through the fly and then suspend the inner on touch-tape tabs or hooks generally get the best flow-through effect. Look at how close to the ground the fly comes. If a fly goes right to the ground then it will not ventilate very well. However, a fly that sits too high off the ground will allow rain and snow to get under the fly and on to the inner. A good compromise is needed.

Ease of pitch is all-important when snow camping. You won't be consistently faced with horrendous weather conditions, but when you are it is nice—sometimes essential—to be able to get under cover as quickly as possible. A tent that can be fully erected by just one person in a few minutes, with a minimum of fuss, is best. Look for a tent that uses continuous pole sleeves, and one where both inner and fly go up as one. This not only saves time, it also saves the inner from getting wet

Wild Gear Survey Snow Tents

	Intended capacity (people)	Design	Maximum interior l x w x h, centimeters	Measured weight kilograms	Poles	Pegs (minimum)	Vestibules	Entrances	Seamless or seam-sealed floor?	Roominess	Ventilation	Ease of pitch	Wind tolerance	Snow shedding	Quality	Approx price
Bushgear Korea																
Jagungal	2	Tunnel	221 x 148 x 109	3.8	3	4/16	2	2	Yes/Yes	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●	●●●	●●	\$450
Caribee Korea																
Caddis	2/3	Tunnel	225 x 178 x 114	3.4	3	9/20	2	2	No/No	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●	●●	●●	\$295
Isoadme	3/4	Dome	249 x 210 x 121	4.3	4	2/12	2	2	No/No	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●	●●●	●●	\$395
Chouinard USA																
Megared	3	Pyramid	276 x 274 x 170	1.6	1	4/9	0	1	No floor/No	●●●●	●	●●●●	●●	●●	●●●	\$198
Eureka Korea																
Alpine Meadows	2	Hybrid A-frame	220 x 180 x 118	3.8	7	4/6	Opt	2	Yes/Yes	●●●●	●●	●●	●●	●●●	●●	\$349
Caddis	2/3	Tunnel	240 x 181 x 116	3.6	3	14/26	2	2	Yes/Yes	●●●●	●●●●	●●	●●	●●●	●●	\$399
Yee Gao	3	Dome	258 x 204 x 122	4.3	5	2/10	1	2	Yes/No	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●	●●●	●●	\$469
Eureka Expedition Korea																
Caddis	2/3	Tunnel	241 x 183 x 115	3.4	3	9/20	2	2	Yes/No	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●	●●●	●●	\$435
Denali	2/3	Dome	240 x 203 x 121	4.7	6	6/27	1	1	Yes/Yes	●●●●	●●	●●●●	●●	●●●	●●	\$689
Fairdown New Zealand																
Strong	2	Dome	212 x 121 x 104	3.6	4	4/16	2	2	Yes/Yes	●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●	●●●	●●	\$645
Altimate II	3	Tunnel	205 x 151 x 116	3.6	2	5/13	1	1	Yes/Yes	●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●	●●●	●●●	\$685
Jardöpen Korea																
Monsieur Dome	2	Dome	204 x 144 x 110	3.5	3	2/14	2	2	No/No	●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●	●●●	●●	\$385
Monsieur II	2	Dome	205 x 120 x 100	3.4	3	4/11	2	2	No/No	●●●●	●●	●●	●●	●●●	●●	\$444
Monsieur IV	4	Dome	250 x 220 x 130	3.8	3	4/11	0	2	No/No	●	●	●●	●●	●●●	●●	\$490
Masque New Zealand																
Cyprus	2	Tunnel	224 x 146 x 112	3.6	3	4/16	2	2	Yes/No	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	\$618
Spectrum	3/4	Dome	212 x 212 x 126	4.6	3	6/10	2	2	Yes/No	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	\$685
North Face USA																
Wayward	2	Tunnel	238 x 152 x 108	2.6	3	7/17	1	2	No/No	●●●	●●	●●●	●●	●●●	●●●	\$765
Salewa Germany/Korea																
Serra Dome	2	Dome	210 x 146 x 106	3.4	3	6/16	2	2	Yes/Yes	●●●	●●●●	●●●	●●●●	●●●	●●●	\$365
Wild Country Korea																
Tristar	2	Tunnel	211 x 123 x 98	3.1	3	3/12	1	1	Yes/Yes	●●	●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●	\$445
Giant Tristar	2	Tunnel	221 x 144 x 104	3.4	3	3/12	1	1	Yes/Yes	●●●	●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●	\$495
Quasar	2	Dome	211 x 123 x 98	3.7	4	4/14	2	2	Yes/Yes	●●●	●●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●	\$549
Giant Quasar	2	Dome	222 x 144 x 104	4.1	4	4/14	2	2	Yes/Yes	●●●●	●●●●	●●	●●●	●●●	●●	\$595
Super Nova	3	Dome	240 x 200 x 120	4.6	5	4/16	2	2	Yes/Yes	●●●●	●●●●	●●	●●●	●●●	●●	\$755
Wilderness Equipment Australia																
First Arrow	2/3	Tunnel	207 x 146 x 121	3.4	3	3/7	2	2	Yes/Yes	●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	\$699

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Wild Gear Survey

before the fly goes on in wet conditions. Domes are harder to pitch than tunnels due to their pole configuration. Wherever poles cross over one another, problems can occur. The Macpac Spectrum is the exception as it is the only dome-style tent that has continuous pole sleeves.

In perfect conditions the problems of pitching a tent do not amount to much, but when you are in a blizzard with freezing gloved hands and a short temper, small problems become major very fast. All of a sudden it can take 20 minutes to get the tent up. After you have purchased a tent make sure that you set it up a couple of times before going on a trip, to get used to how it pitches.

Roominess was assessed for the specified sleeping capacity given by the manufacturer. When looking for tents, you must not only see them fully pitched, with their fly sheet on, but make sure you get inside and check out just how much space there is. When inside a tent, think about where you will put all your gear, whether your sleeping bag will be touching the ends and would you be relatively comfortable in a prolonged storm over a couple of days.

All the **interior measurements** in the table are the maximum in each dimension.

The **weights** given in the table are measured weights, not the manufacturers' claimed weights.

Quality is by far the most important feature of any tent and depends on the overall quality of its components. If a tent is made out of the best possible materials but has a poor design, its overall quality is not good. Likewise, and this is fairly prevalent, a manufacturer will take a good design and make it out of cheaper materials. There have been quite a few copies of very good quality and successful tents put on to the market, mainly Korean-manufactured. Some are good, some are not so good, but none are as good as the originals. It can be very difficult for the consumer to see the difference between good and poor quality in any product and tents are no exception. As a general rule, you get what you pay for; usually the difference in price is related directly to the quality of components and labour.

A tent should pitch fairly tight, with the fly sitting quite taut over the inner, although it should not sit so tight so that it crushes the inner. Look for straight, well finished seams, with reinforcing at all stress points: pole sleeves, peg points, corners and zips.

Also look at old surveys that have been done. If a tent has been on the market for a while and has consistently rated well, it is a fairly safe bet that it is a good tent. Talk with people who have used them, with friends and members of your local walking club, and shop around to see what the different shops have to say—they are there to provide a service, so don't be afraid to use it.

Care. Most of the tents come with a care and use pamphlet, or you will find the information in the maker's catalogue. Always make sure your tent is thoroughly dried and aired before storing.

With normal use, a tent should last for years and years if you look after it properly. ▲

Simon Headlives in Melbourne, where he manages a specialist outdoor shop. He has skied and bushwalked extensively in south-east Australia.

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Poles for Ski Touring

We poll the poles—a *Wild* survey

Equipment

Poles Apart. Poles for ski touring are often a mystery even to skiers who've taken great care in selecting their boots and skis. Choosing poles is too often just an afterthought based on little more than price. Experience has shown that lightweight, inexpensive poles will snap like matchsticks if fallen on with any significant force—not only a blow to your budget if this occurs with any regularity, but possibly also a major inconvenience for you and other members of your party. When choosing poles, be sure to have regard to the type of skiing you will be doing. An inappropriate choice of poles can make for an aggravating experience—as anyone who has lagged behind trying to stride across the flats with poles that are too short, or been frustrated in attempting perfect Telemark turns with poles that are too long will readily testify.

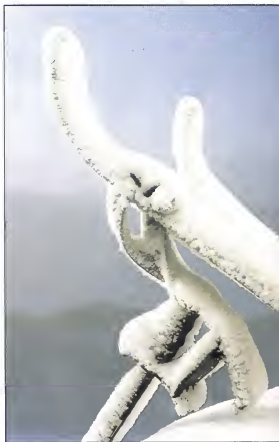
Fibreglass poles are constructed of longitudinal fibres encased in polyester. Inexpensive aluminium poles provide an economical solution to the needs of day tourers who ski with lightweight equipment. Sturdier fibreglass poles constructed of spiral filaments encased in epoxy are generally more robust and reliable for dealing with the increased forces of skiing, and falling, while carrying a pack in the more demanding conditions of multi-day ski tours. Fibreglass poles, however, are not ideal for use with metal-edged skis because they tend to weaken dramatically when scarred by the notches that sharp metal edges so easily produce. Aluminium poles constructed of advanced aircraft alloys, such as 7075 and Zircal, provide the extra strength and durability required by hard-skiing mountain tourers and

cross country downhill aficionados skiing on metal-edged skis.

To determine the correct pole length for touring on cross country skis, the standard method of selecting poles that reach as high as your armpits when standing applies. However, the demands of modern XCD technique require shorter poles of classic alpine ski-pole length. This can be calculated by turning the poles upside-down and holding the shafts directly below the baskets; with your elbows facing down, your arms should form a right angle. The keen XCD skier, who requires longer poles for touring and shorter poles for Telemarking, can either attach extra grips to the shafts of longer touring poles or, more suitably, can invest in adjustable poles to overcome this dichotomy. Some of the adjustable poles combine to form an extended avalanche probe which, although of extremely limited application in Australia, may be useful if you intend touring overseas.

Larger baskets (greater than 10 centimetres in diameter), while ideal for use in deep powder snow, are not as versatile as smaller-sized baskets (7–10 centimetres in diameter) in more typical Australian snow conditions. Large, semi-rigid baskets, as well as being unwieldy, have an annoying tendency to bounce off hard snow when attempting to pole plant. Some adjustable poles come with two types of baskets. Inappropriate baskets can usually be modified or replaced.

Smooth, simple cross country ski-pole grips allow maximum range and freedom of motion within the single plane of movement followed by the poles and hands when touring. Contoured alpine-style platform grips allow for



Above. icy poles? Michael Hampton

more accurate and positive pole planting when XCD skiing but can be restrictive when touring, whereas alpine touring or combination grips provide for precise pole planting without sacrificing touring performance. Some poles are designed to accommodate special self-arrest grips (purchased separately) for use on particularly steep and/or exposed terrain, but most poles can be modified to attach self-arrest grips. Breakaway wrist-straps can be a useful safety feature if you ski in trees, and can be found on a few models.

Stewart Spooner

Putting the Best Foot Forward. Wearing the right footwear in the bush can be an important ingredient to enjoyment; poor-fitting boots may cause problems for the feet as well as the purse. The Intertek chain of shops has a new model to help get you on your feet and, hopefully, keep you there. *Montelliana Kimberley* boots have full-grain, one-piece leather uppers, D-ring and hook lacing, Vibram soles and nylon mid-sole. A pair weighs approximately 1.3 kilograms. RRP \$189.

Also available from Intertek shops is the *Salawa Alpine sleeping bag*, with 750 grams

Wild Equipment Survey Poles for Ski Touring

	Use	Construction	Lengths, centimetres	Approx price	Features	
Choumad Italy						
	Adjustable Probe	Heavy touring, XCD	2 piece 7075 alum alloy	110–145 adjustable (Planks down to 70 cm)	\$99	B or C, D, E, F, G
	Expedition Probe	As above	2 piece 7075 alum alloy	100–145 adjustable	\$125	B or C, D, E, F, G
DSI Italy						
	Lite	Light touring	F42 alum alloy	120–155, 5 cm increments	\$27	A
Exel Finland						
	Nova	Light touring	Glass fibre/polyester	120–160, 5 cm increments	\$20	A
	Active	As above	Glass fibre/epoxy	120–165, 5 cm increments	\$50	A
	Arctic	Heavy touring	Glass fibre/epoxy (Reinforced with carbon and Kevlar)	120–160, 5 cm increments	\$70	A
Gipron Italy						
	Shepa	Heavy touring, XCD	2 piece 7075 alum alloy	100–145 adjustable	\$79	C, G
	Shepa Probe	As above	As above	As above	\$79	C, D, G
Kompetent Austria						
	Teleskop	Heavy touring, XCD	2 piece 7075 alum alloy	110–145 adjustable	\$70	B
Reflex USA						
	XE10	Heavy touring	7075 alum alloy	100–160, 5 cm increments	\$45	A
Swix Norway						
	Twe	Light touring	6340 alum alloy	120–160, 5 cm increments	\$20	A

A Cross country grips
E Choice of basket size

B Combination grips
F Fits self-arrest grips

C Platform grips
G Breakaway wrist straps

D Converts into avalanche probe

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of 550 lbf down. It has a mummy shape with a box foot, not common on mummy-shape bags. Incorporated into the bag is a draught collar to prevent cold shoulders, and small storage pockets for keeping items which may freeze up if left on the tent floor. Rated to approximately -8°, it weighs 1,600 grams. RRP \$279.



Above, Scarpa Tele Sialom Telemark racing boot.

When is a Ski Boot Not a Ski Boot? Two new models of *cross country* ski boots are available this year in the Scarpa range distributed by Outdoor Agencies. The Tele Sialom, top-of-the-range high-performance competition boot features a plastic reinforced cuff with plastic spoiler which extends mid-way up the thigh. For downhill racing, hook and D-ring lacing fastens the boot, with the added security of two alpine-style buckles. The Tele Competition is similar to the Tele Sialom but without the alpine-style buckles, allowing for two extra lace-points. Both boots come with one-piece leather uppers, double tongue, Cambrelle lining, EVA insulation, Vibram soles and reinforced pin holes, and are available in sizes 39-48. The Tele Sialom weighs 1,800 grams a pair (size 41) and costs RRP \$359. The Tele Comp weighs 1,300 grams a pair (size 41) and costs RRP \$299.

Building Snow Castles? With increasing numbers of people venturing in to the snow, a snow shovel is an important item to consider taking. Helpful for retrieving buried tents or building snow breaks, snow shovels are particularly useful when creating snow caves or igloos. The Salewa Ultralite snow shovel is made from lexon polycarbonate alloy and is claimed to be light and tough. Its double-shaft handle folds down the neck of the shovel for compact storage. The shovel is attached to the handle by three rivets and a bolt, and can be adjusted to different angles. Available from Intertek shops, it costs RRP \$75.

Stuck in the Mud. Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the bush comes Super Gripper, lightweight flexible steel tracks which go under the driving wheels of your immobilized vehicle. Complete with two flexible non-rust steel tracks, metal scraper/straightener, instructions and plastic carry-bag, it costs RRP \$99; distributed by Super Gripper Industries.

From Strength to Strength. The Eureka Caddis has been a popular three-hoop tunnel tent, similar to many well-known tunnel tents. It has two large vestibules, one at each end, which allow for storage and cooking. Now available in the Expedition series imported by Aymford, the Caddis has additional features including a 210-count taffeta nylon fly and floor, and quick-release buckles which attach the fly to the inner tent, making adjustment easier than by adjustable cords. Nylon mesh pole-sleeves replace the nylon sleeves, enhancing ventilation. Like all Expedition series tents, its colours are charcoal grey and red. Total weight is 3.3 kilograms. RRP \$489. In the four-pole series is the Essex, a rectangular dome tent which includes vestibules at each end. The length of the inner tent is unusually long, making it attractive to taller people or those who require more room in a two-person tent. The tent poles are 7075 shock-corded alloy. Total weight of 3.8 kilograms. RRP \$399. All Eureka tents are coated with flame retardant.



Above, Outgear Bum Bag.

Bumming Around. Australian manufacturer of packs and accessories, Outgear is well known for attention to detail and solid construction. The latest additions to Outgear's extensive range include the sturdy Bum Bag, a 10 litre canvas pack designed to be worn on your hips. It has an internal foam hip-pad and number 10 YKK zip closure. Side fins adjust to hip shape by pulling or releasing the Fastex sliders located on the fins. Weighing 410 grams and with an RRP of \$51, it should appeal to those going light.

Also new from Outgear is the Quoll, a 30 litre single-compartment day pack. Made from 12-ounce canvas with a Cordura base panel, it has an elasticized lid with top pocket. Other features include a removable foam back-pad, side compression-straps, dual ice axe loops and straps and padded shoulder straps with the facility for a chest strap. All seams are double-sewn and taped. The Quoll is available in grey and red combinations. RRP \$134. It should appeal to climbers as it is a good size for carrying ropes and gear.

Champagne, Anyone? For those who like to venture out in style, Wildsports offers a polycarbonate wine glass (RRP \$4.95). Claimed to be unbreakable, it has been

unintentionally tested by a customer dropping one 80 metres while rockclimbing resulting, the supplier claims, in no significant damage.

A Cornice You Can Ski Under. The Cornice ski jacket from J&H Agencies is a three-layer taslan Gore-Tex anorak. Full-cuff with drop sleeves, it has waist and hem draw-cords as well as a hood cord and neck zip with press studs. Three zipped chest pockets double as hand-warmers. Available in mid-blue and red, black and red or black and yellow, for RRP \$300. Weight 670 grams (large).



Above, J&H Cornice ski jacket.

Jerk and Flex. Reflex ski poles and accessories are distributed by Outdoor Survival. At the top of the range, and definitely a second-mortgage job, is the aluminium Carbon Skate (RRP \$345), weighing 370 grams for a 165 centimetre pair. Constructed of 7000 Easton aluminium alloy wrapped with high-modulus carbon, with the lower third wrapped in Kevlar, it is claimed by the manufacturer to be the lightest and strongest Nordic pole in the world and is available in lengths up to 180 centimetres. At the lower end of the scale is the XE10 Touring (RRP \$45), also made from Easton aluminium. Anodized blue, it is available in lengths up to 160 centimetres. A 140 centimetre pair weighs 380 grams.

Also from Reflex are High Tech lightweight snow shoes with Easton aluminium alloy frames and Cordura decking. With a rigid pivoting binding and four sets of teeth for biting into steep inclines, High Tech snow shoes are 90 centimetres long, weigh 1.7 kilograms a pair, cost RRP \$240 and will fold in half to fit inside a day pack.

Powered Pullovers. Macpac Wilderness Equipment has introduced a new range of single-faced polyester fleece clothing. The Solarlite range includes a zip-neck polo-top (RRP \$75), a pullover which has a short front zip with high collar and two hand-warmer pockets at the front (RRP \$79), and pants cut in a track-pants style, with a draw-string waist and two front pockets (RRP \$69).

New products (on loan to Wild) and/or information about them, including colour slides, are welcome for possible review in this department. Written items should be typed, include recommended retail prices and preferably not exceed 200 words. Send to the Editor, Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Victoria 3181.

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The Alps at the Crossroads?

Release of Bogong draft management plan

Alpine Area-Bogong Planning Unit: Proposed Management Plan (Victorian Department of Conservation, Forests & Lands, 1989, RRP \$6.00).

The Bogong High Plains and their surroundings are one of the most popular bushwalking and ski touring areas in Victoria. Over the years there has been an increasing array of pressures on this fragile environment.

The Land Conservation Council has made a number of recommendations as to policy, many of which failed to adequately protect the High Plains. The proposed management plan is a detailed analysis of the way forward in managing the area, although within the policy framework laid down by the LCC. In many respects the report advocates 'business as usual' in the unit. However, there are several changes which lovers of the high plains will applaud. These include the closure to public vehicles of the Kelly Track and Long Spur Track nine kilometres south of King Spur and proposals to remove a number of unsightly huts of no historic significance.

The emphasis of the proposed plan is on public education, rather than simply relying on rules and regulations. This trend is to be encouraged: most people will do the right thing if they know what it is.

There are some aspects of the plan which may not have been thought through adequately. Whilst proposals for liaison officers between the department and user groups sound attractive, they may have undesirable consequences. Many 'user groups', such as walkers, skiers or climbers, consist of people not affiliated with any particular organization. How will a liaison officer find these people, let alone liaise with them? Paid liaison officers for activities detrimental to the area, such as horse-riding and four-wheel-driving, will institutionalize them and provide a structural pressure to retain them. On the other hand, liaison officers may make it easier to find the right person in the department more quickly.

The proposal to implement seven-year grazing licences in the Alps is of concern. At present, the licences are renewable from year to year. The plan is also silent as to the level of fees to be paid for these licences. To date, the remuneration recovered by the government for this use of a public resource has been so low that the public may well be subsidizing grazing in this sensitive region. Rather than extend the duration of grazing licences, the authorities should bring cattle grazing to an end in our high country as it causes too much damage.

Recent years have seen the growth of large horse-riding tours in the Alps, mostly conducted by commercial operators. The results have been plain to see. Whereas ten



Above: snow gum, Bogong High Plains. Andrew Brookes

years ago there was no track, not even a walking track, visible on Heathy Spur (to give only one example), horse-riding along the spur has created serious quagmires and erosion. Horse manure does little to enhance a wilderness experience, and fouls watercourses.

The proposed plan (following LCC policies) assumes horse-riding in the area is appropriate. It allows for groups of up to 15 horses in the 'Conservation A' zone and up to 25 in the 'Conservation B' zone. No permits would be required for non-commercial groups of up to five horses. There are plans for provision of further facilities (such as yards) for horses on the High Plains, particularly in the areas south of Mt Nelse, the southern Bogong High Plains and around the upper West Kiewa valley.

It is startling credibility to depict large horse-riding parties as in some way heirs to the lonely pioneers (some on horseback) who were the first Europeans to penetrate the area. Tour groups represent a quite different pressure on this public resource. Horse-riding in alpine and sub-alpine areas creates an unacceptable pressure on the environment, and should cease altogether.

Although the report concedes that bicycle riding on 'management vehicle only' roads could conflict with walkers, the proposed plan advocates that cycling be permitted on such roads. Bicycle riding is best kept away from sensitive wilderness areas.

There is a proposal for four-wheel-drive clubs to 'adopt a track' in the area. The clubs will undertake 'voluntary maintenance work' on these tracks. It is hard to understand what it is that drivers will do that they don't already. When they drive along a track and are stopped by a fallen tree they move it out of the way or cut through it. True, drivers have been responsible for removing large amounts of rubbish. But drivers of four-wheel-drives have been largely responsible for putting the rubbish there in the first place. Roads that go nowhere ought to be closed to public vehicle access, and allowing four-wheel-drive clubs to 'adopt' such tracks merely creates structural pressures to keep these tracks open to the public. Sadly, there is a proposal to open the track along the West Kiewa River to public vehicles.

The proposed plan is thorough and generally sensitive to the environment, although there have been some concessions to potentially destructive interests which should not have been made.

In theory, the time for public submissions

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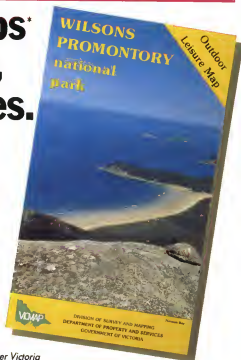
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closed on 31 May. I have been assured the deadline will not be treated strictly. Get your comments in quickly: Department of Conservation, Forests & Lands, 4 Ireland Street, Bright, VIC 3741.

Brian Walters

Thin Air: Encounters in the Himalayas by Greg Child (Patrick Stephens, 1988, RRP \$34.95).

This is the story of three Himalayan expeditions by the author, a regular *Wild and Rock* contributor—to Shivering, Lobsang Spire/Broad Peak and Gasherbrum IV. All three have been the subject of major articles in *Wild*, the first two by Child, and the third by Tim Macartney-Snape. But, perhaps more than any book I've read on Himalayan climbing, *Thin Air* is greater than just a gripping chronicle of high achievement close to the thin line separating the most glittering prizes from complete disaster.

Whilst this is his first book, Child, an expatriate Australian living in Seattle, USA, has become well known through the 1980s for his articles in many climbing and outdoor magazines (as well as his bold climbs in the Himalayas and North America) as one of the best mountain writers in the English language. With the publication of *Thin Air*, the words 'one of' can probably be omitted.

Even though the details of the expeditions described were all well known to me, once started I found it hard to put *Thin Air* down. The climbing is described in a way that got my pulse racing, yet rang completely true. The 'dirty side'—the moments of doubt and fear; mud and logistical problems; pain and squall; clashes with officialdom, porters and other expedition members; and, too often, the heart-rending tragedy—is not underplayed. Child writes with honesty, humility, humour and humanity. But it's no Californian navel-gazing introspection, and there's much more than just the climbing. An acute, sensitive and bemused observer of the ways of the East, Child is at his best describing the antics of Western expeditions when confronted with Pakistani red tape and the military, Balti porters, enterprising indigenous entrepreneurs and Moslem culture. And you can't help sensing that despite the frustrations he frequently experiences at their hands, Child has a more than grudging admiration for the locals. Add to this the excellent background information on the history of the regions and a description of wholesale tragedy on K2 while he was at work on Gasherbrum IV, and you've got a rare book that is likely to motivate both mind and body to new heights from the comfort of the armchair.

Thin Air has a generous lashing of colour photos, including several useful photo-diagrams (one or two of which contain errors) showing routes on many peaks, and interesting appendices of major first ascents in the regions described. Let's hope, however, that Child's next book is not similarly compromised by sloppy editing. But the rest is so good, this can be overlooked.

Chris Baxter

Classic Wild Walks of Australia by Robert Rankin (Rankin Publishers, 1989, RRP \$44).

That *Wild Walks* is a major work of quality

and substance is apparent as soon as you pick up a copy. A large-format book, which is well-designed and superbly printed and bound, it is a good show-case for Robert Rankin's generally excellent photos which are widely known through the extraordinary number of calendars and diaries he publishes each year.

Wild Places starts with 93 pages of photos that are unlikely to disappoint even the most fastidious. Thirty-one detailed maps follow. They are of a quality I don't recall seeing in any other book on the Australian bush. Finally, there are track notes for 25 of the best walks in Australia. All major areas appear to be represented and the obvious classics, such as the Western Arthurs traverse, are there. A chapter is devoted to each walk and includes information on trip grades and times, the environment (with charts of monthly temperature and rainfall), references and maps, access and track notes. Whilst there is obviously no way you could take *Wild Walks* with you, it would be invaluable for stimulation and for planning walks. In this, it is without peer and is a serious, almost scholarly, work of good value. What is more, *Wild Places* is likely to contribute to our knowledge and appreciation of our outstanding and irreplaceable natural resources, and make us more determined than ever to ensure their survival.

CB

Trekking: Great Walks of the World by John Cleare (Unwin Hyman, 1988, RRP \$39.95).

Thirteen supposedly great walks have been singled out for treatment by mostly different authors (although Cleare describes four) in separate chapters. The only walk included from this part of the world is New Zealand's Routeburn Track, by Colin Monteath.

Each chapter comprises a first-hand account of the walk in question, some photos and one or two line-drawings of the region, a fairly general map and a relatively superficial two-page 'fact sheet' on practical considerations.

Unfortunately, *Trekking* falls between two schools: the writing, photography and production, whilst quite good, is unlikely to sell the book on aesthetic grounds alone, and for those wanting information, there just isn't enough of it, or in an appropriate form, to justify the purchase. And, even then, at only four dollars less than Rankin's book, *Trekking* doesn't strike me as outstanding value.

CB

Free-Heel Skiing by Paul Parker (Chelsea Green/Diadem, 1988, RRP \$29.95. Distributed by Paddy Pallin).

The rediscovery of the telemark turn in the 1970s brought about rapid developments in cross country downhill techniques and technology. *Free-Heel Skiing* shares the secrets of telemark and parallel turning techniques for all conditions. It represents a big step for XCD instruction and must certainly become the new Bible for modern XCD enthusiasts.

Author, Paul Parker, is a former member of the Professional Ski Instructors of America's Nordic Demonstration Team and has been free-heel skiing for 17 years. Parker gets the

message across with a combination of clear, sequential diagrams and concise, tidy explanations. He uses key phrases such as 'opening the door', 'pointing your head-lights' and 'tucking the rear leg'. Easily absorbed, these phrases will make a lot of sense when put in to practice on the slope.

Telemark and parallel turns receive equal attention. Beginners, intermediate and expert skiers will find plenty of tips and inspiration in *Free-Heel Skiing*.

Michael Hampton

Cross Country Downhill by Steve Barnett (The Globe Pequot Press, third edition 1987, RRP \$26.50). **Total Telemarking** by Brad English (East River Publishing Company, 1984, RRP \$32. Both distributed by DB Biggs).

One of the most difficult aspects of cross country skiing to master is the ability to ski downhill with style. The best way to learn or improve your cross country downhill skills is to have a lesson. Out of season, however, books such as these are helpful.

Cross Country Downhill covers, in detail, a wide array of cross country information, ranging from equipment and techniques to safety advice. For an informative and instructional book on the popular Telemark turn, you can't go past *Total Telemarking*. Numerous diagrams and photographs add to its impact and ability to convey the messages within.

Both books are well presented and will be popular with XCD skiers this winter.

Glenn van der Knijff

Cross-Country Ski Gear by Michael Brady (The Mountaineers, second edition 1987, RRP \$19.95. Distributed by DB Biggs).

My first impression was that this book would make extremely heavy reading; after further investigation, however, *Cross-Country* is well designed and readable. The first two chapters help the newcomer to understand skis, ski bases, bindings and poles while the remaining chapters individually detail every piece of cross country ski equipment needed to completely outfit a skier.

If you are buying skis, *Cross-Country* will not be a substitute for a salesperson in a ski shop, but for knowledge on ski gear, it will certainly be valuable.

Gvdk

The Rainforest of Tasmania (Forestry Commission of Tasmania, 1987, RRP \$35).

This large-format book is aimed at educating the general public about the types of forests found in Tasmania, without being too scientific. To facilitate this, common names are used throughout the text and captions. The different types of forest are described well with the aid of a set of line-drawings and many supporting colour plates. The inhabitants of the forest are included along with a bibliography and glossary relating common to scientific names. A guide to rain forest communities is included in an appendix; all of the sites chosen are easily accessed by road and aimed at the average car driver.

The colour photos which illustrate the text are very variable. The quality of some is superb and equal to those found in other large-format books. However, there are a few

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that are either not sharp or are poorly reproduced and detract from the overall impression.

The book is quite useful and educational but doesn't present a balanced view. A major section describes the many commercial uses for the timber from these forests and outlines future logging activity. But the opposing view of conservation is inadequately dealt with by only a few brief lines under 'management'. The bias continues into the large bibliography, where there is no mention of any of the major publications produced by the conservation bodies. This is hardly surprising as the book has been funded by the Forestry Commission of Tasmania.

Despite its obvious bias towards the forestry industry, it is an interesting well-presented text that is easily understood and worth reading.

John Chapman

Backpacking with Babies and Small Children by Goldie Silverman (Wilderness Press, second edition 1986, RRP \$19.95).

It would be difficult to find a more thorough guide to taking babies and small children into the bush than this one. Goldie Silverman, a backpacking grandmother, has thought of nearly everything, from how to make a child's pack from an old pair of trousers to a lengthy list of songs to sing and games to play along the track. The book is particularly valuable for those who like to make their own gear as it contains a wealth of clever ideas for the do-it-yourself enthusiast.

Ironically, the book's thoroughness leads to its major weakness: it is sometimes repetitious and contains much information from more general bushwalking guides. There is, however, one serious omission: the section on safety makes no reference to rivers and streams. These are potentially very dangerous for small children, so parents should exercise particular caution when near them. Also, the book is aimed at an American audience, so some of the information is irrelevant to Australian conditions, and some of the gear mentioned is inappropriate or not available here.

Despite these few shortcomings, the book is a very useful and comprehensive guide for bushwalking parents.

Will Steffen

Beyond the Snow Gums: The Alpine Area, Kosciuszko National Park (NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, 1989, RRP \$3.00).

High on the Main Range it is too cold even for snow gums. Here the nation's highest peaks cluster together, and a unique environment unfolds to watchful walkers.

This compact guide will help summer visitors appreciate and care for the alpine landscape as they pass through. Simple well-illustrated sections explain the geology, botany and history of the region. Sensible advice for walkers includes several pages of track notes.

BW

Vertical: A Technical Manual for Cavers by Alan Waril (Speleological Research Council, 1988, RRP \$29.50. Distributed by Speleap).

Read this book! Whether you are a caver or not, if you fix ropes in caves, to rock faces or

even trees, then there is more valuable information in this technical manual than any other comparable book. Even if you thought you knew it all, there is a range of fascinating ideas to be gained from even the most cursory glance through its pages.

Alan Waril has crammed a lifetime's worth of caving into the last two decades and now he has somehow managed to cram every conceivable facet of what he has learned about vertical cave techniques into a mere 152-page A4 publication. Modest by nature, he would argue that he probably isn't the world's best vertical caver, but few would deny that he has written the best up-to-date guide to the sport. Taking everything into account, from the simplest of concerns such as clothing to the most sophisticated considerations of caving with two millimetre Venetian blind cord, he has done ample justice to a daunting task.

The book is easy to read, the instructional diagrams are excellent and the photos clearly illustrate every point they intend to make. Certainly, in this case, every picture is worth a thousand words. Throughout, it is well researched and referenced. It makes use of a multitude of statistics to either reinforce those gut feelings of what is safe, or to scare you into adopting a new, safer alternative practice. The book is enlivened with Waril's laconic humour: 'People who protect their heads with a construction helmet to save money are making a definite statement about the value of its contents'. As for the things the other books don't tell you, the chapter on 'Disasters' is a classic. This is the only technical manual which will have you on the edge of your seat. Now I can't wait for the autobiographical book that describes his adventures, how he has soloed the world's deepest caves and how he came to know so much about Vertical caving.

Stephen Buntan

The Birdwatcher's Notebook by Peter Salter (Weldon Publishing, 1988, RRP \$16.95).

Written as a companion to *The Slater Field Guide to Australian Birds*, this soft-covered notebook for bird-watchers is designed to add more interest to the pastime by enabling you to keep a permanent record of the birds you have observed during your forays into the bush.

A check-list of birds is arranged in the same order as they occur in the *Field Guide* and gives page references to that book. (Details of how to identify them are not included.) After the check-list, there is an index for 60 trips (where details of date, place, weather, companions and so on can be recorded), a nest-record chart, a relative-abundance chart and a chart for recording migrant arrivals and departures.

Useful notes on bird-watching techniques, identification problems, hints for beginners, optical aids, photography, making a hide and a list of suggested books for your library all make interesting and sometimes amusing reading. In fact, readers will undoubtedly desire to become 'twitchers' and attend 'twitch-a-thons' after reading the section on 'twitching'.

Sue Baxter

Publications for possible review are welcome. Send them to the Editor, Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Victoria 3181.

A new approach to a problem as old as the hills.

"Walk in water and you'll get your feet wet" could be an ancient Chinese proverb. It's certainly an age-old problem for anybody who's out and about in all weathers.

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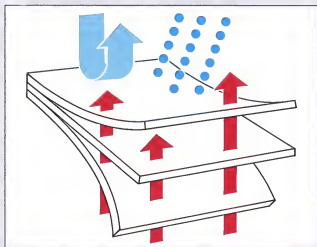
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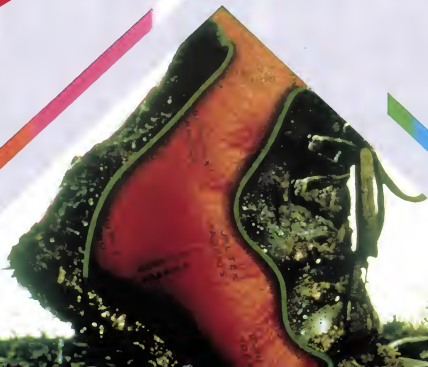
For example, you can machine-wash them and pop them into the tumble drier, they're colour fast and they won't shrink.

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Pulping Tasmania

Editorial brings 'em out of the woodwork (or, at least, what's left of it)

I write in relation to your Editorial and Information sections in *Wild* no 32 where you, once again, stick your climbing spurs into the logging and paper industries and give them a good kicking with the latest hiking boots for good measure.

I think it is time that you gave your readers some information on two issues in relation to the magazine—the first being the paper on which it is printed, and the second being the amount of advertising which appears.

It seems a little hollow to say in an Editorial that 'Tasmania's remaining ancient forests are being pillaged to allow Japanese paper mills to meet our demand for quality paper' when your magazine is printed on white glossy paper. It may even be possible that trees in Tasmania have provided the paper on which your Editorial is printed!

It is shallow to go on in the same Editorial and say 'Then we'll have to seriously consider recycling paper and retraining the workforce'. You are a constant critic of government bureaucracy, yet the statement infers [sic] that you, like others, will wait for regulations to drive the increased use of recycled paper. Why not take the lead, set the example? Is it because multi-coloured advertising layouts will not appear quite so magnificent when printed on recycled paper?

Second point, advertising! In the years I have been reading *Wild*, I have taken note of the quantity of advertising and promotional material that makes *Wild* such a large magazine. Direct advertising regularly accounts for half of the magazine pages. Scouting around the magazines of the popular press, *Women's Weekly* [sic], etc., *Wild* is well out ahead, in fact running equal with the likes of the *Age's Good Weekend* [sic] as a vehicle for advertisements.

Congratulations, you are really in the big league of colour glossies!

Bernard Young
Wangaratta, Vic

(It transpires that Mr Young, who omitted to include his address with his letter, is apparently employed as a 'forester' with a government bureaucracy which derives a substantial proportion of its revenue from logging Australian native forests.)

For some years we have been actively involved in recycling waste paper and there are many further uses for such a product yet to be implemented throughout our society. Conversely, there are currently many unnecessary and unjustifiable uses of quality paper. However there are, of course, applications for which recycled paper is not, yet at least, appropriate. These include photographic publications such as those published by the Australian Conservation Foundation, the Wilderness Society, Peter Dombrovskis, and *Wild*, a factor debated by both readers and aesthetic considerations.

The use of such a high grade of paper should be confined to works which aspire to quality and are of historic, educational and aesthetic value. Unlike many other magazines, Wild is designed to be kept as an ongoing reference, a fact attested to by the unusually high percentage of educational institutions subscribing to Wild, the time and money we devote to the production of—grossly unprofitable—indexes and the demand for these and our magazine storage binders.

High-grade paper confined to such products could, and should, be derived entirely from plantations of appropriate timber, not the short-sighted destruction of our limited and rapidly diminishing ancient native forests. (An article in the Australian Financial Review on 24 April tells that an estimated 2.6 billion advertising catalogues were delivered to Australian consumers last year [160 per person], well over a third of which were thrown out the day they were received. Most of these would have been printed, in colour, on paper of reasonably high quality.)

The percentage of advertising in Wild (exactly 50%) has remained unchanged since our first year of publication and is required to maintain our production quality. This advertising quota, possibly unique in magazine publishing, is filled every issue and much would be advertising rejected, as is 'non-specialist' advertising and advertising for a range of products including tobacco and four-wheel-drive vehicles. Despite Mr Young's claims, Wild carries less advertising than Good Weekend and many other popular publications including some women's magazines. A recent issue of Vogue Australia, for example, carried one-fifth more advertising, on a percentage basis, than Wild, not counting the high level of 'advertorial' common in fashion magazines. They also have circulations many times that of Wild and are largely printed on lighter paper, much of it in black-and-white. In this connection, it is worth noting that Good Weekend is distributed free of cost to the publisher inside its newspaper; Wild pays up to 25% of cover price for this service. Further, in addition to significantly greater buying power in purchasing raw materials, such as paper, most popular magazines, particularly Mr Young's 'colour glossies', are issued by industrial conglomerates, each publishing many titles and enjoying further economies of scale through owning their own printing and distribution companies.

If Mr Young can tell us of an unsubsidized magazine of comparable quality and circulation to Wild but with less advertising, we'd be interested. Editor.

I have just read your Editorial in *Wild* no 32 about the future of my home, I, and a large number of fellow Tasmanians, fully agree with what you are saying. We share your anger and

despair about what is being done. However, unlike you, we are also intensely frustrated because nobody, including yourself, seems to be able to provide possible and viable alternatives that would solve our island's economic problems without such damage being done.

Meanwhile, the inexorable processes continue: with better technology and communications our jobs are transferred to Sydney, Canberra or Melbourne, our children leave to further their careers, and our properties are sold off to mainland speculators. Our major growth industry is unemployment; our most significant export is people.

My major concern though is that you and others misunderstand the depth of feeling that Tasmanians have for their State, their concern to preserve, and to continue to be part of, our way of life. This means in the end that we must have more and better jobs for ourselves and our children. But where do we find them? Certainly not by building pulp mills that ultimately destroy what we want to preserve! But do companies or government departments choose to centralize operations in Tasmania—which is surely feasible; do nation-wide companies put major parts of their operations here? The answer, of course, is no!...

There are a lot of mainland people who are concerned about Tasmania and this concern is welcome and in some instances vitally necessary. However, to focus this concern on the wilderness, forests, and rivers whilst ignoring or glibly passing off the broader concerns of Tasmanians just serves to increase our sense of geographic, economic and social isolation. I ask you therefore to pay more attention to this aspect when you ask the question 'Whither Tasmania?', and perhaps even be a bit more understanding (but not condoning) when decisions are made here that are environmentally unsound and economically suspect.

Thank you though for your editorial; as far as it went I found it well argued and the conclusions compelling. Thank you also for the magazine, which gives me and my family a great deal of pleasure.

Ray Williams
Hobart, Tas

As an avid bushwalker I am very keen to see that areas of native bush are set aside where forestry practices are restricted, but I dispute the argument made in the Editorial 'Whither Tasmania?' (*Wild* no 32) that the answer in Tasmania is to halt logging in all native forests. The Editorial takes the view that forestry practices are a 'short-term gain for a few', yet all Australians benefit by the use of products that are a result of these practices. The idea to 'lock up' the forests for walkers seems to be a very selfish one, since a far smaller

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proportion of the public would then benefit from the forest resource. A far more balanced view is that both forestry and recreation can occur in Tasmania, as the demand for wood products will not stop overnight just because logging is stopped. Maybe the best solution is to educate the public to reduce this demand or to accept recycled products.

The Editor's use of the greenhouse effect is, I believe, an erroneous one, as in most cases the forestry industry is replacing the forests that they harvest. These regenerating forests have been shown to use more carbon dioxide than old, senescent forests, and so forestry practices are in this way helping the fight with the greenhouse problem.

This is not to say that forestry practices cannot be improved. For too long the industry has not taken a responsible attitude towards the environment, and has been able to get away with this, but with responsible management our forests would be able to grow to meet the ever-increasing demand for wood and recreational products.

Nick O'Brien
Ringwood, Vic

The Editorial in *Wild* no 32 makes a strong condemnation of the Tasmanian forestry industry. The major threat to Tasmania's bushwalking areas is not forestry, which affects most existing walking areas very little, but overuse and abuse by bushwalkers ('loving the parks to death'). *Wild* has chosen to largely ignore this issue and to ridicule some of the management actions aimed at controlling the problem.

Many forms of 'management' will inevitably be unpopular since a major attraction of bushwalking and related activities is to escape from bureaucracy. However, some 'wilderness management' is essential for environmental protection and to prevent severe overcrowding. *Wild* should play a major role in educating bushwalkers on acceptable behavior in wilderness areas and should encourage debate on management issues so that the more enlightened management proposals win rapid public acceptance and the sillier ones are rejected before they go too far...

Nick Sawyer
South Hobart, Tas

Rope Boys

Thanks for the superb job you did on my Mt Wellington Track Notes and book reviews in *Wild* no 32. Unlike Simon Vallings, I'm quite happy for you to knock my submissions in to shape...

Congratulations on your Editorial (*Wild* no 32)...I'm glad you speak out in print, no-one else seems to...

Stephen Bunton
North Hobart, Tas

Congratulations on your handling of Simon Vallings's article and letter.

John Garrett
Birchgrove, NSW

Readers' letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address, for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Victoria 3181

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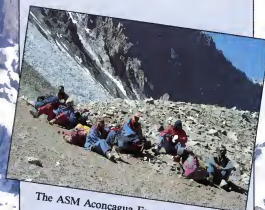
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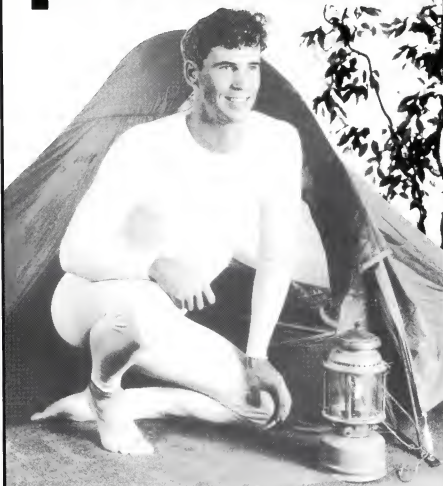
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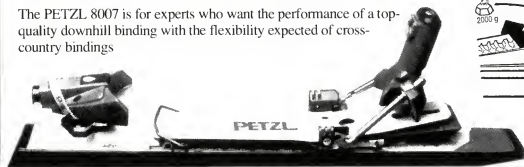
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Clubs are invited to use this column to advertise their existence for the benefit of novices and newcomers to their areas, to keep in touch and to give notice of meetings or events.

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